

Embodying Places: Making Meaning in Performance

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I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.

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There is no creation without place.
(Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place* 16)

Abstract

This thesis develops a poetics and practice of place for contemporary performance. A poetics of place explores ways of knowing and making place. It must be prepared to chart new pathways and refresh habitual perspectives. In this thesis, performance poetics involves taking steps toward questioning how it might be possible to rethink place/s anew. A poetics invested in ways of perceiving and making sense of the place-world also, by necessity, needs to consider current conditions and the difficult questions that affect us all (although in very different ways) living in the 21st century where problems and issues concerning place and ‘placelessness’ remain largely unresolved.

Underpinning this poetics are particular ways of thinking about place informed by perspectives from philosophy, phenomenology, geography, history and cultural and critical theory. I draw on a range of place-thinkers, including Edward Casey, Gaston Bachelard, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Paul Carter to explicate a performance poetics sensitive to the *inhabiting of place/s*. Specifically, it is Casey’s philosophy of place, and his notion of implacement, that is of particular significance as I work towards developing a framework for thinking about and engaging with place/s in performance. Investigating implaced and embodied experience are central to the kinds of critical speculation which, in pursuing the aims of this thesis, I argue, can potentially open up a diverse range of distinct experiences between body and mind, person and place, self and world.

The explorations this thesis generates around ideas of place and ‘placelessness’ have currency in an increasingly fragmented, globalised world. Rather than accepting the negative aspects of ‘placelessness’ and displacement I explore these ideas through detailed analyses of some recent examples of performance and performance research. The responses gleaned from these analyses aim to provoke reflection on past legacies, present conditions as well as the future implications of being in place/s as part of contributing to an awareness of the full significance and importance of this phenomenon. This investigation of place through performance builds a framework

for 'reading' place/s that calls for other ways of understanding or coming to grips with what it means to inhabit places today.

Contents

List of Figures	vii
Acknowledgements	x
Introduction: Points of Departure	1
1. Towards a Poetics of Place for Contemporary Performance in the 21 st Century	11
2. <i>Triple Alice</i> : Desert Medi(t)ations	39
3. Walking: Revelatory Acts of Place-making	65
4. Urban Encounters: Performing City Landscapes	111
5. Inhabiting Place/s	133
6. A Research Journey/Journal	174
7. Performance Production and Documentation	208
Conclusion	221
Works Cited	227
Appendix:	
(a) The Mill Project: Performance DVD	

List of Figures

Fig. 1. Hamilton Downs Station, image from <i>Triple Alice</i> Archives	44
Fig. 2. Body Weather Participants engaging in an ‘M/B’ session	48
Fig. 3. Exercises from the ‘Manipulations’ session of the Body Weather training component	50
Fig. 4. Workshop participant engaged in a ‘Groundwork’ exercise	52
Fig. 5. Workshop participant (Larissa Pryce) working from sense-memory	53
Fig. 6: Workshop participants engaged in a ‘Groundwork’ session at the dry river bed of the Todd River near Hamilton Downs Station	59
Fig. 7. Workshop participant (Larissa Pryce), ‘Ground work’ training session <i>Triple Alice 1</i> , exploring the environs of Hamilton Downs	63
Fig. 8. Midland Railway Workshop, Midland 2003	73
Fig. 9. “Domenico and Mark’s Walks, 2003”, <i>About Performance</i> 7 (2007): 48.	77
Fig. 10. Fig 10. Paterson Road, c.11km NNE of Pinjarra, 101	85
Fig. 11. Murray River , <i>Void: Kellerberrin Walking</i> (2005)	88
Fig. 12. Cnr Davies & Tilbrook Rds, 40km NNE of the Kellerberrin cinema	91
Fig. 13. Between Cattle Chosen and the Busselton High School	93

Fig. 14. <i>Blue Boy Walks</i> (April & May 2004)	121
Fig. 15. <i>Public Drift: Mis-Guide to Anywhere</i> (2004)	126
Fig. 16. The East Perth Power Station (photograph courtesy of EPRA)	141
Fig. 17. Perimeter fencing surrounds the East Perth Power Station	145
Fig. 18. The Maylands Brickworks	149
Fig. 19. Map of the Peel Region, Western Australia	155
Fig. 20. Cooper's Mill, 2005	157
Fig. 21. Photograph of Cooper's Mill from the 1940s which shows it boarded up	162
Fig. 22. Image of Cooper's Mill, n.d.	168
Fig. 23. Detail of Murray River delta, courtesy of <i>Shire of Murray Map and Information Guide</i> . 2002.	183
Fig. 24. Online map showing route taken from Perth to Yunderup. Map. <i>whereis.com</i> . Web. 30 Nov. 2010.	185
Fig. 25. Online Map showing route taken from Australind to Yunderup. Map. <i>whereis.com</i> . Web. 30 Nov. 2010.	186
Fig. 26. Inscriptions on the interior wall of the mill	199
Fig. 27. <i>Postcard of Cooper's Mill</i> . N.d. Photograph. Pinjarra Visitors Centre, Pinjarra.	200
Fig. 28. <i>Postcard of Cooleenup Island</i> . N.d. Photograph. Pinjarra Visitors Centre, Pinjarra.	201

Fig. 29. Reginald Cooper. <i>Letter to Murray Road Board</i> . 1959. Unpublished letter.	203
Fig. 30. Performer using the pontoon to cross the river	207
Fig. 31. Recording sounds of the island environs	212
Fig. 32. Walking at Cooleenup Island	216
Fig. 33. Murray River by boat	219

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Introduction
Points of Departure

This thesis is a critical and creative exploration of place-making in performance. It investigates ways of embodying places, and the kinds of questions this can potentially raise in the context of creative research. The critical value of my investigation into place/s is that it calls for re-thinking one's own relationship to place as well as considering the wider implications of what it means to inhabit places. Living in this globalized, technologically developed, socio-cultural world as a creative practitioner and human being means examining the implications and consequences of human inhabitancy. Our existence on this earth raises many issues, and in recent years has taken on a renewed significance with new paradigms emerging in Performance Studies which aim to articulate the changing nature of human interactions to and with place.

I argue for ways of seeing, and being in, place/s that can deepen awareness and encourage self-reflexive thinking about the interconnectedness between people and places. This is demonstrated through analysis of embodied modes of contemporary performance practice in terms of the kinds of meanings and responses they can potentially invoke, for both the performer/s and audience/s. Performance Studies offers important insights into the role of places in our everyday lives. I use the concept of inhabitation in this thesis to develop a theoretical and practical framework for place-making that draws attention to the lived embodied experience of being in place.¹

The inspiration for undertaking research into 'place' and 'inhabitation' came from my experience as a workshop participant in *Triple Alice 1* as part of the *Triple Alice* project led by Tess de Quincey (see Chapter 2). This project was conceived as a series of three performance laboratories taking place over a three year period in 1999, 2000 and 2001. This performance laboratory, located geographically in the Central Desert of Australia, offered a complexly nuanced experience of how place and space are intimately connected to an embodied way of understanding the act of being in place. It was by training in Body Weather that workshop participants were

¹ "Being in place" is a term I use throughout the thesis to invoke a sense of the intentionality (and inseparable nature) which underscores the relationship between human beings and places. My use of this term shifts in emphasis from "being in place", "being-in-place", and "being-in place", as I draw attention to specific aspects of the relationship or to reinforce its historical usage. The idea implicit in the term "being in place" is influenced by the philosophical understanding of "being-in-the-world", an expression that Edward Relph claims "enfolds a wealth of meaning and subtlety" (Geographical 17).

given a framework for experiencing the desert, through an experimental approach that focused on the role of the senses and perception. Habitual ways of seeing – and being in – place and space were challenged by participating in the framing and focusing of the desert context through elements of the practice which integrated critical lessons for opening, deepening and expanding an awareness of being in the place-world.

Undergoing the rigorous training and exploration of desert terrain for three weeks fundamentally changed my embodied experience of self and my perception of place and space. I returned to Perth, after *Triple Alice 1*, with a tangible sense of desert place permeating my fleshly being.

After *Triple Alice* I wanted to engage with, as well as critically understand, how the experience opened up my being. Although I had participated in some training workshops of Body Weather and Butoh practice prior to *Triple Alice*, the experience of the Body Weather laboratory in the desert evoked, for me, a radical shift in my relationship to the creative possibilities of embodied performance practice and raised questions concerning how embodied perception can be used to connect “the” body to places and spaces in the world. However, in light of the life-changing experience offered up by the *Triple Alice* project, it was difficult (at the time) to find a language, in terms of a theoretical framework, that could capture a sense of the felt, lived dimensions of being in, and exploring, the desert. The embodied experience was not something that I thought could be simply explained.² There was an embattled quality to my writing in trying to make sense of the experience through the use of critical theory.³ In the months that followed being-there in the desert, I began to experience ‘after-effects’ that evoked the embodying of ‘familiar’ places through the activation of memory, imagination and day-dreams. The force of these affects induced, for me, the beginnings of a personal and cultural *awakening* (after Walter Benjamin) which

² After *Triple Alice 1*, I corresponded by email with several theatre and performance theorists and practitioners who had participated in the writers’ workshop component of the laboratory and/or the Body Weather workshop component. There was, at least initially, a dialogue which opened up regarding the use of theoretical frames in order to make sense of the event. While different theoretical approaches were utilised by theorists and practitioners in formulating a mode of response to the event, many of these frameworks did not capture a sense of the embodied experience for me. I am aware, however, that *Triple Alice 2* and *Triple Alice 3* were constitutive of other modes of response from theorists and practitioners.

³ This raised, for me, the issue of writing about an event after it has happened.

has led to undertaking a physical journey into places.⁴ Journeying in, through, across, away from and back to places has become a guide for both the form and the process undertaken in writing this thesis and acts as a mode of response to my experience of *Triple Alice*.

The *Triple Alice* project raised, for me, many interesting questions which coalesced around issues concerning the relationship between experience and its interpretation, the ownership of the experience through scholarly forms of representation, the representation of place in performance, the purpose or value of the work, as well as the documentation of the event in terms of how, what and why performance is recorded. The relevance of these questions, I believe, are that they act as a guide in terms of how a cultural practice is defined and the kinds of responses that can potentially be invoked from those who participate in them. The ongoing interrogation of the *Triple Alice* project by both creative practitioners and theorists, affirms the value of its contribution, especially in terms of how cultural practice can offer alternative perspectives towards seeing, and being in, Australian space.⁵ The *Triple Alice* project has had a lasting impact on my own sensibilities as a creative practitioner and theorist. In many ways, it has led me to pursue what it means to inhabit places, as well as, how places inhabit us.

In pursuing my inquiry into inhabitation this has led to an experiential and conceptual understanding of place which derives from the creative collaboration between theory and practice and from the cross-fertilisation of diverse art forms. This is in keeping with the need to change and develop new perspectives from which to understand performance as the changing landscape of our digital global culture, the Internet age and the creation of new performance technologies cultivates an environment that is rapidly transforming how people culturally perceive and interact with places and spaces. Finding ways to elucidate a sense of the connections, interrelations and movements between people and places is at the heart of my inquiry, and frames my way of understanding ideas about place and inhabitation for

⁴ This interpretation of ‘journeying’, which is linked to Walter Benjamin’s notion of ‘aura’, is discussed by Rojek, *Indexing*.

⁵ Some of these contributions include McAuley, *Unstable*; McAuley, *Body*; M. Anderson; and Vedel, *Dancing*. Recent discussion about Triple Alice includes the “informal conversation”, *Triple Alice: from where to where?*, Performance Space Clubhouse, Sydney, 25 February 2010.

performance. In this thesis I develop a theoretical and practical framework that focuses on exploring human connections to and with place. I draw on key ideas about place and the body from philosophy, phenomenology, geography, critical and social theory as well as performance theory and practice. These ideas form an interdisciplinary landscape that informs my approach for exploring place/s which I describe as ‘poetics’. A place poetics is a way of thinking about and engaging with places that aims to open, deepen and expand an awareness of the place-world (and its importance) in our lives through creative practice.

Anne Buttmer, offers a useful way of thinking about this approach, when she writes that poetics

denotes the evoking of geographic awareness, critical reflection, discovery, and creativity. It elicits curiosity and insight about relationships between humanity and the physical earth in themes such as culture and landscape, sense of place, nature symbolism, or the history of ideas. ... The poetic dimension should ideally address the critical and emancipatory interests of all other practices. (*Geography* 15)

A poetic approach is important to my thesis in constituting ways of understanding, participating in, and developing connections to places.⁶ In this context, the poetic dimension offers a platform for thinking about place (and its evocation) as both a category of practice and a category of analysis.⁷ Poetics are tools of analysis that I use as a way towards knowing and making sense of place, and which I explore by engaging with the embodied experience of place and its interpretation.⁸ A poetics of

⁶ This is not to say, quoting Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst, that such an approach simply “reflects some kind of reality or truth” that I have discovered about place, but rather “that it creates reality and gives meaning to the world” (9). For a detailed discussion of some recent perspectives which foreground “ways of” conducting creative arts research, see Grierson and Brearley.

⁷ Derek Gregory writes, in *Geographical Imaginations*, that Pierce Lewis believes “[t]he ability to evoke people, places, and landscapes is an essential prerequisite to analysis but it is not a substitute for it”. Gregory believes that evocation, and he uses the example of moral-aesthetic sensibilities in works by E. P. Thompson, “need[s] to be inscribed *within* critical analysis; they are not thresholds or supplements to intellectual inquiry but essential moments within it” (83).

⁸ The relationship between experience and interpretation is written about by Sandra Kemp, and it is an idea I explore further particularly in relation to the way that the body contributes towards the process of creation and how this influences the ways in which audiences respond to, or ‘read’ a performance work. The body is an important part of my poetics for place-making in performance. For more information regarding some contemporary approaches that work with the ‘lived’ body as a way

place performs a critical function that draws attention to experiences of beings and places with implications for how we then make sense of our own place in the world.⁹ Performance is an art form that can further enhance this critical function by drawing on a range of aesthetic mechanisms with which to offer recipients new and multiple perspectives of the place-world. In this light I consider how performance contributes towards making sense of place, by examining the critical and creative strategies and practices used in some recent contemporary works that explore experiences of being in/out of place.

I engage poetics at a fundamental level, evoking the poetic (felt, lived) dimensions of the body to gain access to those multiply-defined dimensions of human existence thematized as ‘senses of place’, ‘belonging’, and ‘identity’ that our relationships with place/s potentially yield. While these global themes have broad interdisciplinary appeal, they also form rich sites of exploration in performance dedicated to place research and inquiry.¹⁰ These are themes that come under scrutiny in my investigation of place in this thesis. I examine the interrelationship between place, belonging and identity as part of a dynamic and ongoing process informed by embodied modes of inhabiting place/s. I draw insights from place-making practices (such as walking) which engender a conscious awareness of being in place, and explore ways of finding meaning in the process of making connections to places.

In each chapter I foreground how performance works to deepen and enrich an experience of place. My research enquiry explicates a creative and critical process for engaging with place/s that I believe can be useful for performance theory and practice. It aims to foster an ethos of interconnectedness with place/s as a necessary precondition for creatively engaging with them.¹¹ It also proposes how, as theorists

towards knowing and making sense of human experience, see Steinman; and Todres. They both offer practical applications of phenomenological concepts and approaches towards humans making meaning in creative and real-world contexts.

⁹ For some examples regarding forms of poetic modes of response in constituting the lived, experiential dimensions of place, see F. M. Vanclay, Matthew Higgins and Adam Blackshaw.

¹⁰ Examples of performance works that explore aspects of this terrain include *Bubbling Tom* by Mike Pearson, *Under Siege* by Mona Hatoum, and *One Square Foot: tree* by Deirdre Heddon. For analyses of these works, see respectively, Heathfield, *Small* 172-185, Pearson, *In Comes I*; Ahmed et al 59-90; Heddon, *Thousands*, Mock 153-176.

¹¹ I use the term ‘place’ (singular) to reflect the conceptual configuration where I foreground the idea of place as distinct from the places (plural) themselves with all of the concrete dimensions. This suggests a doubled kind of circumlocution in regards to place in terms of trying to bring unity to the

and practitioners, we might responsively consider our relationships with place/s, how they can be approached as sites of reflection, change and transformation, and how modes of performance that *take us into places* can potentially enrich our lives and the landscapes we inhabit.¹²

Each chapter in this thesis marks a stage in my own ongoing developing practice for inhabiting places. Each is an accumulation of making and knowing place and speaks of the forms that I became interested in as part of the process of the philosophical and methodological investigation of place. I explore, examine and analyse specific modes of inhabiting place through my own creative engagement as a participant and spectator in practices such as Body Weather, contemporary walking practice, urban dérives, and ethnographic fieldwork, a diversity of forms which have influenced the shape and direction of the journey undertaken.

To help situate and explain the methodological and theoretical framework of the thesis Chapter 1 offers a theoretical map for the journey. Philosophical perspectives are explicated to assist a way of understanding and thinking about what it is to inhabit places with the body, and the forms this takes throughout the thesis. The chapter discusses some of the conceptual ideas integral for understanding my poetic approach towards place. In particular I have sought out notions of place and embodiment via the philosophical writings of Edward Casey, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard, Martin Heidegger and Paul Carter. Together these ideas constitute a topo-analytic framework that is useful both in theory and practice for it can be used to extend the reader/spectator's knowledge and understanding of the significance of being-in-places within the performance experience and the wider place-world.¹³

idea of 'place' and also connect this to the real, actualities of 'places'. For criticism regarding the tension inherent in the gap that constitutes the in-between of 'place/s' see, Carter *Care At A Distance*

¹² Place-making calls for an awareness of local circumstances and their connection to a broader schema in the place-world. As part of my investigation into place I am interested in how creative encounters with the place-world affect the imagining of it. For more information on this, see Jill Bennett.

¹³ I do not wish the reader to assume that there is a hierarchical relationship between theory and practice. Instead there is a sense of dynamic interplay between my practice and a range of theoretical frames which have developed over time. I did not set out to engage in practice with a theoretical armament at the beginning of this research yet I cannot undo the theory that I now know. Therefore theory shapes and assists with an understanding and way of reading my own work and the work of other place-based performance practitioners.

In Chapter 2 I focus on particular aspects of the *Triple Alice* project, and how it led me on a path for thinking about the wider implications of place. It is a case study account, in the form of auto-ethnography, and offers some reflections on the Body Weather laboratory workshop component drawing attention to the embodied and emplaced experience of being in the Australian desert. I foreground some of the ways in which this project offers a model for thinking about, and engaging with place and space. At the core of the Body Weather training practice is an ethos which does not offer an ‘answer’, but rather an ‘opening’ up to the possibilities of the task of creative cultural practice. The opening that occurs, acts as a vehicle of contemplation (or mediation for the individual) for thinking about how place-making in creative practice can contribute towards knowledge production in ways that open or evoke a consciousness of place through the sensory and experiential dimensions of our being. I argue that a different relationship between self and place emerges and how this can potentially draw attention to where dis-connections between places and beings exist.

Chapter 3 contributes towards this discussion as I analyse two recent examples of performance, *Void: Kellerberrin Walking* by Mark Minchinton and *Breathing for Biago Walking (A Walk from Perth to Kellerberrin)* by Domenico de Clario, in which walking is practiced as a critical strategy and creative mode for interrogating the living remnants of personal history and memory. These walks inhabit particular tracts of land in Western Australia as a way of bringing to light a sense of some of the complexities underpinning (indigenous and migrant) relationships to this country. In my analyses, I argue that walking practice is a form of identity-making that can open up a dialogue between past and present with important implications for future imaginings of Australian place and space. Walking opens up the possibility for re-visioning a sense of relationship between self, past, present and place. More importantly, I interrogate how this embodied approach is used as a strategy for poetic and political modes of writing by the performers to produce reflexive accounts that engage with the process of reading places. Walking and writing entwine giving shape to a practice that aims to interpret the experience of embodying places.

Performance can reinvigorate familiar lenses and frames through which people know, interact and see places. In light of contemporary understandings of place and placelessness, Chapter 4 brings a critical awareness to ways of re-framing

place(lessness) within an urban context. I discuss these ideas via analytical framing shaped by the writings of Casey and Jean-François Lyotard. Using these ideas, I pose questions about how we might think differently about the places we ‘know’ or are familiar with in the context of our habitual everyday lives. I consider these questions in response to some recent examples of contemporary performance work, highlighting some of the strategies explored in the practice of *Wrights & Sites*, focusing specifically on their “mis-guides”. Although it is important to understand a practice by being cognizant of how it works, it is also important to participate in the framing and focusing of places where we live and intrinsically are a part of. Therefore, I respond by writing from my own experience as a participant in *Strange Strolls*, an audio-exploration curated by Perdita Phillips that unfolded in and around the city of Fremantle.

Inhabiting places, for me, is a dialectical question that has taken on the form and process of a journey (as noted above). My thesis is in part a documentation of this lived, embodied process with the expression of ideas and practices that resonated for me. In the next three chapters I explicate some of the meaningful encounters with places that I have experienced, and the affects they have had upon my ways of seeing and responding to being in places. A close reading of places emerges in my analyses, to establish content and context, and draw insights from my own bodily responses to offer a mode of response that traces the presence of the body and the interplay between body and place.

In Chapter 5 I offer an account of my own investigation into place, which is my contribution to place, in which I take up the interconnection between being in place and interpretation. I explore places as a critical and creative resource for situating myself in relation to practice and its articulation, and as a way of thinking through my connections to places. My exploration unfolds in and around the urban context of Perth, engendering a reflexive awareness of different kinds of places, and leads to my encounter with ‘heritage places’. I reflect on key aspects of this exploratory process such as the complexities of finding, and negotiating with, heritage places amidst the impact of wider, global forces. This becomes the catalyst for undertaking a personal journey beyond Perth to explore Cooper’s Mill, a heritage place located on an island in a regional locale. Undertaking fieldwork at this place generates research and the

collection of historical documents and histories. This leads to a consideration of the relationship between heritage practice (in this area of performance) and the discourses in which they participate.

Chapter 6 documents some of the forms and processes involved in researching and inhabiting Cooper's Mill. It also considers the ways in which these forms and processes inform my creative response for embodying this specific place and its island-bound context. I explore the interdependent relationship between this place and the processes of making a performance work. I perform aspects of my experimental practice and processes that underlie my engagement with heritage, history and place. The performance is recorded on DVD, and Chapter 7 outlines some of the elements of the practice which feature in the performance.

I conclude with some reflections on the contribution of this thesis to ways of understanding and theorising the importance of place in creative research. The framework I have developed shows how theory and practice together provide ways of thinking about, and engaging with, concepts of place, as a means to enhance understandings of place in relation to the people who experience them. I focus on how my thesis explores and develops modes of inhabitation in contemporary performance through place-making practices that foreground the role of the body in constituting meaningful interactions with places as they are felt and lived by both performer/s and audience. In an age of globalisation amidst a growing sense of placelessness, it is imperative to continue a critique of existing modes of inhabitation, and to find creative ways of responding to place that can potentially transform how the person-place relationship is realised, enacted and embodied. What I propose in this thesis is a performance poetics that aims to pursue some critical and creative pathways towards thinking about what it is to inhabit places.

Chapter 1

Towards a Poetics of Place for Contemporary Performance in the 21st Century

Place is a fundamental aspect of our humanity, yet there are different ways of making sense of this dimension in both art and life. This chapter aims to elucidate the critical importance of place and to set out some of the coordinates for its engagement in this thesis. Herein, I discuss key concepts of place and inhabitation that bring to the fore intersections between body, mind and the place-world.¹⁴ The concepts I examine augment a philosophical and theoretical framework of place to support a way of thinking that enhances a sense of the embodied aspects of being in places. More importantly, these concepts connect to a performance poetics that works on engaging our whole being – connecting body, mind and imagination – to and with the places where we live and dwell. I offer these conceptual understandings of place to the reader as pathways into the kind of place-poetics I explore in both performance practice and analysis. They assist a way of reading place that can potentially bring a critical awareness to thinking about how people connect to, and make sense of, their own place in the world.

Conceptions and expressions of place

To approach ways of thinking about place and inhabitation, and how they inform my poetics for performance, I draw on specific ideas of Edward Casey. Casey's philosophy of place offers a rich source of ideas about how to examine and comprehend place. His ideas help to foreground the significance of place, particularly in contradistinction to modernity's preoccupation with space (and time), as he believes that it is place which is universally significant.¹⁵ His study of place has a growing relevance to many disciplines and fields of research that foreground issues of place in the 21st century. In recent years his ideas have come to underline the feelings, expressions and concepts of place, and sense of place, being explored in

¹⁴ I approach the concepts of place in this thesis similarly to Brian Massumi's approach to the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze recognising the workings of discourse as "levels at play" resonating with affect, intensity and experience. Glossing Massumi, rather than seeing place concepts as "transcendental in the sense that [they are] not directly accessible to experience" they are "not exactly outside experience either." They are "immanent to it-always in it but not of it." Conceptualising is part of understanding my poetics. They generate a "resonating level" of intensity, affect, meaning and experience that operate on the mind in a way that calls for understanding, and the process of interpretation that accompanies "an unleashing of potential" (33).

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of the concept of place, and the way that Casey sets forth an argument for place, as opposed to 'space' and 'time', see *How to Get from Space to Place*. For a critical rejoinder to Casey's arguments and approach in both *The Fate of Place* and *Getting Back Into Place*, see Brockelman.

performance studies.¹⁶ His writings about place articulate an understanding of ‘place’ and the ‘body-place’ interrelationship which are important to my own way of thinking about, and approaching place in performance.

Place is an a priori concept for Casey, configured as “at once the limit and the condition of all that exists” (*Getting* 15). He uses these distinctions to explicate an understanding of place that is “far from being merely locatory or situational”, for “place belongs to the very concept of existence. To be is to be bounded by place, limited by it” (*Getting* 15). Contra to notions of boundary or limit that define place in ways that reduce, or separate, Casey recognizes these attributes of place as relational terms that are intrinsic to being.¹⁷ He challenges any simplistic idea of place as “a thing in itself” which would be “to make place absolute or transphenomenal ... a cluster of physicalist predicates” (*Getting* 30). Instead he argues that “[p]laces, like bodies and landscapes, are something we experience – where *experience* stays true to its etymological origin of ‘trying out,’ ‘making a trial out of’ (sic) ... an experiment, out of living”, and this, he adds “requires the proof of the senses, and often of much else besides” (*Getting* 30). What Casey proposes, and, which acts as a guiding principle throughout this thesis, is that places, are “primary in the order of culture” ... they “are matters of experience. We make trial of them in culturally specific ways” (*Getting* 31).¹⁸ He believes that “[w]hat matters most is the experience of *being* in ... place and, more particularly, *becoming part of the place*” (*Getting* 33, original emphasis). His approach emphasizes a conceptualization of place which is relational, and constitutive of cultural interaction and experience, in ways that inform configurations of being and becoming.

In particular, Casey argues for understanding place as intrinsically part of every individual’s sense of being and knowing.¹⁹ This is an important perspective that I interrogate in my discussions of place in this thesis. I give critical attention to ways of being in, and knowing, place by approaching the relationship between place and

¹⁶ For more information see, for example, McAuley, *Unstable*; Grant; and works by Vedel.

¹⁷ However, there is also a difference between ‘limit’ and ‘boundary’ which emerges – “A frame implies a tight, uninterrupted delineation of that which is framed, a limit or perimeter rather than a boundary” (Casey, *Getting* 217-218).

¹⁸ This is an idea explicated in the work of Margaret Rodman who argues that places are “politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions” (205).

¹⁹ For more information see Tuan, *Space and Place*; Feld and Basso.

the human experience of it as a process under construction, (in the making) rather than something which can be definitively known, fixed or predetermined. For me, this means approaching place from the perspective of (a) being (who is) in relation to and with place, open to place and the kinds of experiences it can potentially yield. This way of thinking is informed by my reading of Casey, when he writes that, “there is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it” (*How to Get* 18). As Casey sees it, “to be in the world, to be situated at all, is to be in place” (*Getting* 15). “Implacement” is the term he uses to conceptualize the phenomenon of being-in-place.²⁰ It reflects the fact that human existence is situated and specifically somewhere, in ways that reveal the concreteness and significance of our place bound lives. His concept of ‘place’ is important in understanding that place constitutes our lived world, where “[t]o live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the places one is in” (*How to Get* 18). Place matters to a way of thinking about being and knowing as a phenomenology of implacement.

Everything we do, and everything that we are (and are yet to become), is inextricably interconnected in some way to place. According to Casey,

[p]lace is as requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have. We are surrounded by places. We walk over and through them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them. Nothing we do is unplaced. (*Fate* ix)

While this passage identifies some of the core structures and aspects of human experience in an everyday sense, it clearly brings into view how place is necessary to being and doing. For Casey, place is *where* we do things, but more importantly he attributes meaning to what we do (and who we are) because of where we are. He foregrounds how place constitutes human experience, “specifying its power to direct and stabilize us, to memorialize and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in

²⁰ Casey uses the terms ‘emplacement’ and ‘implacement’ interchangeably to delineate the nature of the relationship between being and place as a relational phenomenon. While the ‘em’ and the ‘im’ attached to ‘placement’ are different kinds of pre-positions, I use the term ‘implacement’ throughout this thesis as I agree with Casey that “[t]he *im-* of *implacement* stresses the action of getting in or into, and it carries connotations of *immanence* that are appropriate to the inhabitation of places” (*Getting* 315).

terms of *where we are* (as well as *where we are not*)” (*Getting* xv). The significance of place, drawn from my reading of his philosophy, is that it plays an “animating” role in constituting the social, cultural and historical dimensions of our individual and collective lives (p.31). These powers of place are compelling reasons for further investigation of how people experience what it means to be in places. This is important to my discussion of place in performance which proposes a way of understanding how place is part of the live(d) dimensions of our being. To be, at all, is to acknowledge the formative role of place in our lives.²¹ Place grounds identity, and brings it into being (see Chapters 3 and 5). In this thesis, I explore how place acts as a vital constituent of human experience, identity and senses of belonging and some of the ways it contributes towards poetic forms of expression.²² In bringing these dimensions to life, the challenge and opportunity for performance is to find (new) ways of expressing these human connections to places.²³ I believe that this must address the human dimension; our presence in, and interaction with place/s and our sense of responsibility to the place-world. It must also recognize the profound importance of place simply to exist as a human being.

When meanings are attributed to place a ‘sense of place’ emerges. It is important to address not only the kinds of senses of place used in contemporary discourses but how the concepts used in discursive configurations lead to upholding a particular sense of, or understanding of place. Investigations in fields of anthropology and human geography, for example, which examine ways that places are significant and meaningful spaces in the life-worlds of people, have identified problems with the conceptualising of place.²⁴ In ethnographic accounts, one of the critical issues is that human action and experience often becomes separated from the place in which it occurs. This reinforces the idea of place/s as “physical setting” or “inert containers”

²¹ While this is an idea that is ontologically part of the life worlds of many people and cultures, it is not one that is considered to be germane to Western consciousness.

²² The ways in which place contributes to human experience is a consideration in the work of philosopher Yi-Fu Tuan who recognizes the cultural dimensions that give shape to how people feel, imagine and think about space and place. His experiential perspective acknowledges the affect of time in shaping senses of space and place.

²³ I realise that a discussion of the ‘new’ prompts a consideration not only of the practices of performance making but also philosophical questions such as the meaning and purpose of being a performer/artist in today’s era of rapid yet, uneven globalisation. For more on the complexities of this issue, see Danto, *Gap*.

²⁴ For more information, see Doreen Massey, *Space* 146-156; Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga.

where things happen (Rodman 204-205). Rather, it is important to consider the relationship between place, human action and experience as an ongoing process informed by the lived structures which affect our ways of knowing and making sense of who and where we are (as well as where we are not) as Casey notes above. Methodological approaches that draw attention to human experience and ways of reflecting on and sharing experiences give a sense of “the things which matter to us, and which constitute our lived world” (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 11). The main point here is that the meanings people give to places can assist with understanding the significance of the interrelationship between human experience and place in ways that can reveal what peoples experiences of the place world are like. Peoples experiences of place/s vary according to a multitude of factors. In this thesis I analyse evocative kinds of relationships to place/s, by focusing on how performance translates and frames experiences of place for the spectator/reader. The examples I discuss aim to share key insights about the place world, and how people see themselves as part of it (or not). By exploring different kinds of place experiences (in and through performance) this can contribute towards creating new meanings of place and emplacement.

The importance of making sense of the interconnectedness between human beings and places forms a core framework for much phenomenological inquiry dedicated to identifying and describing models for how to approach an understanding of place as well as the practical and philosophical implications of a phenomenology of dwelling. As I have discussed above, the priority Casey gives to place/s in our everyday lives is a central aspect of his phenomenological quest to reveal the extent to which we are connected (whether we are aware of this or not) to place. In the context of geographical studies, phenomenology is characterized by Edward Relph, as “a way of thinking that enables us to see clearly something that is, in effect, right before our eyes yet somehow obscured from us” (*Geographical* 15-16). Performance and theatre, like philosophy play an important role in attending to the “unconcealment process” of human perception (Krasner and Saltz 3). These art forms “shed light on thought, behaviour, action and existence while simultaneously enhancing our comprehension of the world and ourselves” (Krasner and Saltz 3). My critical engagement with specific examples of performance works in the following chapters aim to discuss and discern some of the ways in which they open up or share new

experiences of place with audiences. I will argue that these works offer audiences opportunities to re-imagine their relationships to, and perceptions of, place and the world.

As a phenomenologically oriented researcher, it is my intention to use performance to reveal aspects of place (and being-in-place) we often take for granted, or simply fail to see.²⁵ This is a perspective which informs the critical and aesthetic relation to cultural practice in this thesis, whereby “at work [is] a negotiation of specific cultural contexts, as well as familiar ways of seeing and understanding the world” (Grierson 26). In light of contemporary concerns with issues of place which foreground the absence or loss of place (‘placelessness’), performance can refocus the phenomenological lenses of our (habitual) vision. Performance can help us to identify the blind spots and provide a context for our seeing, to activate modes of perception and underlying assumptions implicated in how we (the spectator) think about places.²⁶

Body and place

It is through the body, and more specifically the interaction of the senses, that we come to experience being-in-place. I explore ‘being-in-place’ as an embodied mode of enquiry in relation to creative place-making. This also serves a critical function so as to participate in and develop ways of connecting with a sense of “the concrete facticity of being and to understand this world we are living in” (Birkeland 19). Invoking this sense of embodied connection to place finds synergy with Casey’s approach, wherein special consideration is given to the body. His phenomenological framework, applies the notion of *topoanalysis* (after Gaston Bachelard), as a way of approaching the intimate embodied dimensions and the broader implications of being-in-place. He writes, “[m]y body continually takes me into place. It is at once agent and vehicle, articulator and witness of being-in-place” (Casey, *Getting* 48). Bodily being is continuously engaged in apprehending and orientating itself in,

²⁵ For more information, see Stanton B. Garner; and Simon Shepherd.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion of how philosophy conceptualizes the relationship between thought and perception and how performance can extend the configuration of thought and perception, see Massumi.

through and across place. Our bodies are the gears which lever us into places. In Casey's analysis, an understanding of embodied implacing coheres around concrete examples of the relationship between body and place in ways that reveal place through our bodily actions and interplay with the environing place world. He considers how the shifting relationship between body and place produces an intimate knowledge of being-in-place through a study of modes - directions that constitute experiences of being "here-there", "near-far" and dimensions of "right and left", "above and below", "before and behind" (Casey, *Getting* 43-105). I interpret these modes as conjoined and tensional parameters which for Casey "contribute to the unity and vitality of our being and moving in places" (*Getting* 97). This primary topographical framework offers an insight into how being involves a sense of location as well as direction and motility which work in concert to activate an embodied relationship to place. He explicates how both body and place act together as an "articulatory arc", ... "reach[ing] out to circumambient places and regions in continual outbursts of corporeal intentionality" (Casey, *Getting* 96). In experiential terms this constitutes a "reaching out that opens up" which animates the body and connects the body to place (Heidegger, *On Time* 15). It is through these parameters of being-in-place that we experience (however provisionally or contingently) in our everyday lives the "lived body that is the dynamic bond to place." (Casey, *Getting* 74) Through the concerted action of our bodies we come to know and have our places.²⁷

Casey's analysis of embodied implacing can be read as an active and dynamic mode of mediation which not only takes us into places but also brings places into the bodily realm, or reach, of experience. The importance Casey gives to the body, and the role that the body plays in experiences of being in place, is a view I share. I further develop modes of experiencing being-in-place in the collaborative creative process of fieldwork and articulate the felt, lived significance of experiences that affect my way of seeing and being in place.

²⁷ Rather than reading this as an appropriative gesture I understand the interconnection between body and place as outlined here in the sense of getting the measure of places. Extending on my reading of Casey's notion of implacement it suggests to me a process of being in places that involves getting the bodily measure of them and this entails going into places (*Getting* 63).

While I have considered the notion of emplacement as a process of being bodily in place, I also want to consider the notion of displacement which is an experience of being somehow disconnected from place. The pervasiveness of displacement is a frequent characteristic of these postmodern times in which we live. Casey notes that, “entire cultures can become profoundly averse to the places they inhabit, feeling atopic and displaced within their own emplacement” (*Getting* 34). Relationships between people and places are unique, complex, and dialectical. How displacement affects the lives of people and the connections they have with places, although experienced in many different ways, is a compelling issue; one which performance artists respond to, often drawing on lived experiences and a language of the body to evoke “lived-through correspondences” (Merleau-Ponty 236). The human capacity to feel and make sense of the felt, lived dimensions of experience is a dynamic part of the meaning making process in performance. In this thesis I discuss how the body can, in this process, activate a felt immediacy with places in ways that register the affects of different kinds of bodily knowledge. I also consider how this can assist the audience to get in touch with experiences of being-in-place, or conversely, out-of-place. For theorists such as Casey it would seem, that many people increasingly occupy an in-between state, for it is as “[i]f we are rarely securely in place and ever seemingly out of place” (*Getting* xvii). He considers that the broader implications of displacement (personal or collective) speak of “the loss of a vital connection with place itself” (Casey, *Getting* xiv). This is a phenomenon that he believes “derives from in large measure from a failure to link up with places” (Casey, *Getting* xiv).²⁸ In re-thinking how to remedy the loss of the ‘vital connection with place’ that Casey speaks of, I believe this can be approached by refocusing attention on the relationships to place/s we enact with, and through, our bodies (*Getting* xiv). I engage with experiences of place that register connection or disconnection which is something that is felt and lived by, and with, the body.

²⁸ What Casey is suggesting here, and I am critical of, is that mobility brings about disconnection with places.

Embodied Being

A key component of my poetics is foregrounding an awareness of the embodied experience of place. In this thesis, approaches towards place-making emphasize the role of the body in relation to place by being-in-place (see discussion above). ‘Being-in-place’ is a term that expresses the phenomenological relationship between person and place. It invokes the idea of a unitary model of parts connecting with wholes, which seek to encompass each aspect as constitutive elements that contribute towards experiences of place. To revitalise (or restore lost) connections with place, which is one of the practical aims of my poetics of place, it is the contribution that ‘the body’ imparts to the ‘body-place’ interrelationship that I examine in this section. The dis/connections I explore between body, and place in performance are important for demonstrating how the body can inform experience/s of place and communicate an understanding of the felt dimensions of these experiences. The performance works I analyse use modes of seeing and being in place that bring place into being through, and with, the body. In the performance experience the role of the body (the performer/s and audience) contributes a meaningful and responsive dimension with which to make sense of human experience in ways that can potentially unpick the seams of our being as well as give shape to other (latent and potential) levels of being and belonging to the world. The significance of the body in terms of how we experience being-in-place/s is constitutive of meaning, making understanding possible.

In my view, the body is experienced and lived as the intimate grounds of our knowing.²⁹ This is a way of thinking informed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy which considers the human body to be the centre of the experiential world.³⁰ The body, for Merleau-Ponty “is in the world as the heart is in the organism:

²⁹ More recent formulations of ‘the body’ contribute towards new understandings of the experiential dimensions of corporeality. The term ‘embodiment’ increasingly supplants ‘the body’ to discursively represent “a shift from viewing the body as a nongendered, prediscursive phenomenon that plays a central role in perception, cognition, action, and nature to a *way* of living or inhabiting the world through one’s acculturated body” (Weiss and Haber xiv). This suggests a reconsideration of the criteria for what and how philosophy constitutes ‘the body’.

³⁰ Merleau-Ponty’s way of thinking has proven inspirational to many place writers and led to a re-examination and renewal of the terms of significance which ground experiences of place through, and with, the body producing descriptions that speak of a continuum and simultaneity of being and world. His writings have proven to be influential to the work of many theorists and practitioners in diverse fields of practice and scholarship, including performance studies.

it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system” (235). His theory of the body explicates a system for how we experience being in the world through the interaction of embodied perception and sensory experience, modes which activate our being and connect us to the world.³¹ He writes that “[s]ensory experience is unstable, and alien to natural perception, which we achieve with our whole body all at once, and which opens on a world of inter-acting senses” (262).³² He makes the point, as Juhani Pallasmaa summarises, that through the interactivity of the senses, our “sensory experiences become integrated ... in the very constitution of the body and the human mode of being” (40). However, any fixed or settled notion of integration is called into question as “[o]ur bodies and movements are in constant interaction with the environment; the world and the self inform and redefine each other constantly” (Pallasmaa 40). The role of the body and all sense modalities collaborate to inform “[t]he percept[ion] of the body and the image of the world” (Pallasmaa 40). In Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy, perception is an embodied phenomenon.

The development of such insights has obliged a rethinking of perception, the body and the ways in which the world is ‘seen’. Merleau-Ponty offers a most explicit account of the ways in which the body is intimately present in acts of perceiving the world. As he sees it, “we are in the world through our body, and in so far as we perceive the world with our body” (Merleau-Ponty 239). His understanding of perception goes beyond any simple notion of seeing with one’s eyes, as he extends this inquiry to the whole body. The “material bodiliness” of perception that underpins phenomenological approaches in theories and practices of the body convey an understanding of “seeing” [as] always ‘bodied’ seeing, mediated and affected by the physical mechanisms with which it is done” (Shepherd 7). Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of embodied perception is important for re-thinking ways of relating to and perceiving the place-world. What this suggests to me is that the body and the senses provide a key to “reawaken[ing] our experience of the world as it appears to us” (Merleau-Ponty 239). To unlock such experiences calls for approaches which

³¹ The ideas of perception and sensory experience in his earlier writings are incorporated more fully into the immanence of embodied being-in-the-world in his later writings.

³² The interactivity of the senses have been well documented in phenomenological literature, although as M. L. Lyon and J. M. Barbalet note, accounts vary in regards to the degree of agency attributed “to the body in the generation of the ‘subjective matrix of experience’ ” (60).

explore the interrelationship between place, body and environment in ways that can reawaken what we see, think, feel and know about places. This is a perspective which is significant for my own thesis in terms of investigating an embodied approach for inhabiting places that experiments with sensory-perception as a framework for invoking a renewed awareness of (ways of seeing and being in) the place world.

In the context of performance, stimulating “our perception mechanisms” serves an important purpose, for as theatre director Anne Bogart argues,

the role of art is to wake us up. Routine takes the place of life so easily. The senses resign, numbness enters. Our job as artists is to sharpen our perceptual mechanism on a daily basis in order to venture out into the world with curiosity to receive, perceive, and report back. (Bogart 113)

Performance has an important role to play in reconfiguring the capacities of our bodies to feel and connect to the place world. This is an urgent area of concern, particularly in light of recent responses that perceive the anaesthetization of the senses to be connected to the conditions of our contemporary (Western) cultural existence (Classen, *Fingerprints* 2). This is an aspect that I explore in performance by “remaking contact with the body and with the world” in ways that are mindful of being in places and what this experience can potentially evoke (Merleau-Ponty 239). The richness of embodied experience is given emphasis by Pallasmaa who writes that, “[w]e behold, touch, listen and measure the world with our entire bodily existence, and the experiential world becomes organized and articulated around the centre of the body” (64). Embodied sensory perception informs existential experience - our *sense of being* in the world – and this offers numerous possibilities for exploring ways of understanding how we are both in place and implaced in creative investigations of place. To explore the body-place interrelationship by engaging with specific geographical and constructed environments can provide a “contextual horizon of perceptions” for both audience and performer/s (Stewart and Strathern 4). Exploring places that are part of the physical world using creative frameworks which aim to heighten embodied sensory perception can be a way of

tuning in to how we are connected to, and part of, those places we find or, paradoxically, lose ourselves.

Performance/art that experiments with ways of approaching the experiential dimensions of contexts where we live can invoke an awareness of the relationships that engage the grounds of our being. Drawing attention to embodiment as part of a dynamic process in world construction can be used in performance to develop distinctive positions and perspectives that also involve much broader concerns about the relationship between society and the self and the ways in which the body is culturally constructed (Heathfield, *Live* 12). Our body is the point from which we view the world, a perspective open to contingency and flux as the world changes and our connections to and with places also change. How we, individually and collectively, perceive the world goes beyond reflections of a particular sensibility and/or circumstances. Our perceptions act back onto understandings of who we are as human beings and this in turn acts back onto human actions in the world. For Merleau-Ponty “[t]he world as perceived through the body” is “the ground level for all knowledge” (Pallasmaa 62). Our body is the first place, the grounds of being. Embodied modes structure our engagement with the world and vice versa. Merleau-Ponty makes the point however that, “[s]tructures are lived rather than known and therefore can never be apprehended passively; but only by living them, assuming them and discovering their immanent significance.” (258) This is important terrain for creative practitioners who work dialectically in relation to and with place, experimenting with modes of embodied sensory perception as a means with which to reveal nuances of meanings and a bodily felt language of experience. It is also terrain that corresponds to my own way of understanding the role of the body in relation to developing a philosophy and methodology for place-making and knowing in performance. Merleau-Ponty’s approach is influential to my work in terms of exploring how human beings “unique mode of existing” can open pathways for encountering the place world by engaging with the body as a means to illuminate these encounters (xviii).

The understanding of sensory perception as an embodied phenomenon is an idea explored in Merleau-Ponty’s descriptions of the lived body dynamically interacting with the world. His philosophical approach proposes an active, expressive

relationship between body and world which I seek to develop further in constituting ways of experiencing emplacement. I want to briefly consider how this lived approach gives primacy to the body as a way of experientially knowing the world (we live in), as there are implications here for understanding how, as human beings, we are existentially situated – in place and implaced. His ideas can further aid discussion of a phenomenological and embodied approach towards the experiencing of place.

Merleau-Ponty attributes the “lived” aspects of “the body as felt and experienced by the human subject” and which “possesses its own corporeal intentionality” (qtd. in Casey, *Fate* 229) to be “the phenomenal and motor aspect of our bodily being in the world” (Carman 43). Integral to Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of the lived body (influenced by Edmund Husserl) are ideas of movement and space. He seeks to show how the sensorimotor capacities of “the mobile body is continually orienting us in the particular space in which we find ourselves” (Casey, *Fate* 230-231). The movements of our bodies are constitutive of a dynamic process which spatialize, orient and localize our being connecting the body to place and space. Movement is a form of sense experience involving the activation of tactile, kinesthetic and proprioceptive systems of the body.³³ These systems of the body constitute how we “sense ourselves” (Steinman 11). In Casey’s reading of Merleau-Ponty (and Husserl) he notes, however, that the kinesthetic experience of space “need not imply anything subjective ... inward and personal.” Instead “[t]o feel our body feeling its surroundings is not to be caught in the circuit of selfness” ... but to engage ourselves openly and vigorously with these surroundings” (*Fate* 234). Rather than overlook the ‘self’ that is constituted in moments of physical and moving interactions with place, for me, this raises some interesting questions concerning the relationship between the self, body and place. As Merleau-Ponty’s approach towards the experience of perception reveals, there are intimate, “inside” levels to what the self physically experiences and perceives in the process of engaging with its surroundings (Johnson 25 – 34).

³³ For more information on this, see Laura U. Marks.

Exploring the relationship between body and place can offer the creative practitioner practical tools, as well as pose challenges, for how to sense being in the world in ways that can extend and potentially transform an intensely personal experience (at the level of the body) into an intersubjective or public one.³⁴ The critical point here is that “[t]he body itself is place-productive” (Casey, *Fate* 236, original emphasis) generative of place-knowing and making. And, as there are many different kinds of bodies this suggests that the felt, lived experience of being in and engaging with places will produce many different kinds of experiences of places. I believe it is important to consider how the body feels in moving through and engaging with the place world. This is a process I explore further through means of the lived approach (the knowing, intentional body) as a creative mode of inquiry in relation to what this can potentially reveal about who and where we are.

Investigating the interrelationship between our bodies and the places and spaces surrounding us is fertile terrain for artists exploring multisensory experience and ways or forms of constituting these experiences. This necessitates an investigation as well as a critique of how the body becomes a system of meaning, so that I can explore the embodied process to consider the veracity of my research and practical findings. In Merleau-Ponty’s words, “[t]o be a body is to be tied to a certain world”, meaning that each and every person is connected in an embodied sense to place/s in the world (250). There are also social, cultural, historical and political dimensions to these ties that shape peoples embodied experiences of being connected to particular places. In defining the cultural dimensions of these connections, Relph notes that “[p]laces occur where ... webs of significance woven by humans, ... touch the earth and connect humans to the world” (Relph, *A Pragmatic* 311). These connections are constituted by and with our bodies. Our bodily movements occur somewhere in particular in a nexus of social relationships and play a part in constituting these relationships. To extend on this idea in the context of performance, the ties that are constituted by the lived, moving body do not leave spaces surrounding us unchanged. Rather, movement has a palpable extension in the world and as stated earlier this will

³⁴ An embodied sense and connection to place is perhaps common in many people’s experience. To create a feeling of connectedness with places can soon become only a memory, receding into the background of human experience. Taylor Carman writes that, the “contact we have with the world in perception is something we are intimately familiar with throughout our lives. But it is neither open to full public scrutiny nor completely hidden and ineffable” (43).

act back onto how people understand the world and by implication come to define the experience of being in it. This is a perspective that emerges in Casey's reading of Merleau-Ponty's (account of the) lived, moving body to illuminate a sense of lived space. For Merleau-Ponty, the generative capacities of the lived aspects of the body recognize that being is an expressive relationship between body and world. As Casey explains,

the body continually exhibits “expressive movement” – is never not expressive, not even when it is engaged in the most abstruse geometric operation – so the space in which it moves becomes an expressive space, having its own physiognomy, its affectivity and style. (*Fate* 230)

What this approach reveals is a way of understanding how the movements of our bodies constitute space and bring it to life. It suggests that through our bodily actions or movements the spaces where we are situated become changed, or charged with a tangible felt sense of their own. There is a tendency in Merleau-Ponty's writing to give precedence to the term ‘space’ (rather than place) as if this offers a tabula rasa awaiting the imprint of the body and perhaps also an unlimited field for movement. In certain contexts, and with particular bodies, this is not so easily realised. For although “the body itself is grounded in movement” there needs to be a critical awareness of the spaces and bodies where movement is constricted/restricted (Ingold and Vergunst 2). This is an issue which intersects with a range of disciplines, such as anthropology, architecture, social policy and planning, and cultural studies. It calls for rethinking the ways in which the body is understood, to enhance new ways of thinking about the body, and how connections between body and space/place can be produced. In light of philosophical discussions of ‘the body’, it is at this point that I question what/whose body is in view, and what kind of affect/s this particular body has in co-constituting the expressivity of ‘space’. Performance is an artform equipped to address this issue as it “explores the positioning of ... bodies in relation to time and space, and emphasizes how such positioning impacts upon the set of bodies that watches and listens” (Shepherd 1). For the performer the body is frequently regarded as a tool for artistic expression, creating and bodying forth new worlds and new visions of places, to (potentially) affect the ways that audience members see, think and respond. Performance and cultural practices that focus on

bringing a mindful awareness to the experience of engaging with and moving through both place and space is a process that will also be shaped by those places and spaces surrounding us.

Formulating an understanding of the lived, moving body in terms of “expressive movement and bodily orientation” leads to, “*inhabitation*” which Merleau-Ponty shows as our bodily mode of being (Casey, *Fate* 231). He proposes a way of thinking about the body which encompasses (and integrates) spatial and temporal dimensions of experience. However, he cautions that,

[w]e must therefore avoid saying that our body is *in* space, or *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time. ... I am not in space and time; nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them. The scope of this inclusion is the measure of that of my existence. (Merleau-Ponty 161-162, original emphasis)

Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy offers a means of understanding how our bodies cannot be separated from experiences of place and space. This approach offers a way of knowing (in terms of a methodology for creative practice) for making sense of the connections between bodies and places. It is an area to be explored in practice. Drawing on his writings, I propose a notion of *inhabitation* that involves embodied ways of enacting relationships to and with place, as a means to explore the latent and potential dimensions of place/s and the embodied experience of being-in-places. An embodied, phenomenological perspective is important to my own way of working as a practitioner because I want to create work/s that produce affective moments and visceral responses that can make us (the audience) feel alive, ethically aware of the nature of human relationships and actions in places, as well as the value of places in our lives and our wider interconnectedness on a broader scale. Performance can ravel and unravel the lived experiential dimensions of human existence in ways that can reveal the politics of making, as we (performer and audience) embody what we feel to be profound truths of being.

Topological approaches in creative explorations of place

This brings me to a consideration of the fact that thinking about and experiencing places can contribute to understandings of place and propose new directions for how to creatively inhabit them. To further extend the concept of inhabitation discussed above, I also draw on topological approaches as pathways for exploring places through and with the body. This approach is inspired by the idea of topology in Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. Bachelard designates the term 'topo-analysis' (place analysis) to refer to "the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" (8).³⁵ His topo-analysis is an exploration of the self through place. To his way of thinking, the experience of inhabitable spaces (such as the house, nests, shells, corners) activate the oneiric capacities of our imagination, memory and daydreams.³⁶ For Bachelard, (these) places are a rich resource for creative knowledge. Our human ability to imagine, remember and dream are invoked in his account of places (e.g. the house) where there is a corresponding personal history as he focuses on exploring the significance of places where the self has lived or which are known through past association. However, his approach goes beyond 'biography' or a temporal sense of history as he seeks to reveal how the self experiences places through framing a response in terms of what is noticed, felt, thought, and imagined (Bachelard 9). Topo-analysis is not an exact science but rather a phenomenology that engages with the "poetic logos", the language of psyche and soul, (Bachelard 9, 13) to elucidate "the topography of our intimate being" (Bachelard xxiv). In my reading of his topoanalysis it is the psychic relationship to place that is of importance. For Bachelard, the "inner life" is "a becoming of our being" (xxiii) where poetic forms (imagery) materialize in a manner producing reverberations which open up our being in ways that are psychically enriching.³⁷

³⁵ However, Bachelard's caveat in relation to topo-analysis states: "Many a theorem of topo-analysis would have to be elucidated to determine the action of space upon us. For images cannot be measured. And even when they speak of space, they change in size. The slightest value extends, heightens, or multiplies them. Either the dreamer becomes the being of his image, absorbing all its space or he confines himself in a miniature version of his images. What metaphysicians call our being-in-the-world (*être-là*) should be determined as regards each image, lest, occasionally, we find nothing but a miniature of being" (173). My own understanding of his notion of topo-analysis is that it is not an abstract concept that can be known in any definitive sense, as this could potentially lead to a reduced sense of being and with this the human capacity to imagine.

³⁶ Bachelard writes that "[d]reams, thoughts and memories weave a single fabric. The soul dreams and thinks, then it imagines" (175).

³⁷ The psyche (unconscious and conscious) receives and responds "to replace such contents by offering them imaginal aegis, a home for their continued prospering" (Malpas, qtd. in Birkeland 109).

In reading Bachelard's topo-analysis, I have come to understand that it is the phenomenological experience of place which is of value (to human being). He delves into the poetry of experience through an approach which is oriented towards space, that is, the places that surround us and which we occupy. His approach offers a way for how to consciously pay attention to experiences of places in our everyday lives. To experience place is to enter into an encounter with the image of place, and to probe the matter, topoanalytically, through questions that engage with the experience of being-there (Bachelard 9). He states that phenomenology requires "images be lived directly, that they be taken as sudden events in life. When the image is new, the world is new" (47). This is an invitation (to the reader) to always approach the image of places anew, and in doing so it is possible to experience a deepening of the relationship between our inner and outer worlds. While Bachelard does not explicitly draw on an embodied perspective as part of his approach toward place, he recognizes that there is an immediacy and sense of affect which place has on our being and ways of knowing and creating place through perception, imagining, memory and reverie. These are modes of consciousness that create versions of reality and give meaning to places in the world. They are also, I believe, materially and sense-rich and can be used in creative contexts to give shape to senses of place. In developing a topological approach for performance, I want to work with the material threads connecting us to places to reveal the lived, embodied dimensions of being-in-places.³⁸ Therefore I re-interpret his approach by incorporating the affects that places can have on the senses in ways that acknowledge the body's capacity for response. His approach to reading places acts as a potent reminder of the possibilities that are open to human existence if we engage our whole being to create conditions of possibility for dialogic exchanges between self and place.

How each individual experiences places is open to interpretation. However, the usefulness of Bachelard's poetics, I believe, is that it aims to make a difference to how a person (or the reader) experience spaces and places through an approach which does not interpret images of places in a literal way but rather uses language (poetry) as a means for connecting the reader with an experience of "being-there" in

³⁸ Some topological approaches which have been charted in performance/art demonstrate some of the ways that self, place and memory can be explicated as sites for performance. See, for example the creative work of Mike Pearson, Deirdre Heddon and Graeme Miller.

space (218). In this sense, topo-analysis can be read as a creative way of re-experiencing and coming to know a place (as if for the first time). It calls for listening to the way that the experience of being-there resounds inside us, (whether this strikes a chord within our being) and connects us to the place-world. To poetically dwell is to engage the spaces of our being in a way that can be described as “an enfolding of self with place, of the outer with the inner” (Pinn 45). Bachelard’s poetic experience of dwelling invokes a permeable exchange between inside and outside, where

the ‘in’ ingredient in inhabitation is a fluid focus, one that is in constant communication with the ‘out’ [...] There is ‘an osmosis between intimate and undetermined space.’ Thanks to this osmotic, two-way flow, dwelling is in-dwelling in such a way that we also find ourselves *out in* the ambience of that which we inhabit. (Casey, *Fate* 293)

Bachelard’s poetics captures a sense of being-in-place which suggests an accompanying change to our being in ways that can shift our consciousness of places.³⁹ Becoming place-aware is to experience an exchange between “ourselves” and “that which we inhabit”, a process which can challenge notions of discrete or fixed boundaries between self and place.

Topo-analysis lends itself to further explication of concepts of inhabitation in ways that I believe can poetically disclose our relationships to places. The contribution of topological, place-aware approaches such as Bachelard’s may be more useful for understanding self, than psychological methods as “[he] shows that ... place may have many dimensions and meanings ranging from symbolic, emotional, cultural, social, political, economical and biological” (Birkeland 108). The significance of such a topological approach can draw out the specificities of places revealing interconnections between self-identity and places to show how places touch our lives. Topo-analysis is also an inspiration to cultural geographer Anne Buttimer who believes that it can deepen “relationships between the self, space and place” as it

³⁹ Birkeland argues that in Bachelard’s topoanalysis he “wants to uncover the affective meanings of psychic place and explore how poetic images emerge into consciousness as a result of the being of human beings” (109).

suggests a way in which the self can (using images) “create a bridge or connection between the interior and the exterior world” (qtd. in Birkeland 108). It is the connections we make with places that can potentially transform our sense of self and ways of thinking about and experiencing places, becoming a catalyst for changing how we see, think and also possibly act in relation to places.

Incorporating embodied phenomenological approaches into a poetics for understanding place, can bring place into the foreground of our (embodied) conscious awareness rather than keeping place as physical background setting or tableau for human actions within which to unfold. This is reflected in the examples of performance I discuss throughout this thesis which draw from emergent forms of experimental practice informed by site-specific and ambulatory models of being-in-place.⁴⁰ While it would seem nowadays that to understand place and inhabitation calls for models of dwelling which “cultivates journey, horizon, and reach, often at the expense of dwelling, centers, and homes” (sic) I adopt both views of dwelling/journeying not as separate models but as complementary or dialectical modes of investigation (Jopling 62). More importantly for my own investigation of place and inhabitation, I turn to some recent examples of performance that explore place-making and knowing as a journey. In these performances being-in-place as well as out of place are explored as sites for critically engaging with the broader socio-cultural and political landscape/s we inhabit in ways that produce intersections and connections with, for example, historiography, memory, ethics, and environmental responsibility. These kinds of relationships with place emergent in performance bring together the ‘personal’ and the ‘political’ as a twofold consciousness attentive to particular circumstances that resonate within us and within the broader cultural landscapes we inhabit.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Although I focus on particular kinds of performances that occupy the spectrum of creative production known as site-specific and ambulatory performance I believe that the relevance of the concepts explored here can contribute towards a consideration of how place/s and inhabiting place/s play a vital role in shaping the pathways of artistic inquiry. This is not to suggest however, that this is not relevant for other kinds of performance work.

⁴¹ The experience of place invokes other issues connected to the social, cultural, historical and political.

Re-thinking dwelling

To further consider what dwelling is and what it requires from us in the 21st century, I turn to the contribution of ethically informed writing about place by Heidegger and Carter. Their ways of thinking about place reflect the phenomenological concern for disclosure about the nature of human relationships to place and the nature of dwelling as a human being. To understand their philosophies of being in place and dwelling, the role of poetic language as a form of expression, is important to their perspectives. The role of language is also important to my thesis in terms of the performance texts I analyse and how writing is connected to embodied explorations of place. While their philosophies affirm the knowledge that human existence is intimately related to dwelling, they also call for further deepening our understanding of what dwelling might mean within a constantly changing environment.

In his essay, “Building Dwelling Thinking”⁴² Heidegger considers the nature of that which constitutes ‘human being’, through re-tracing the etymological origins of these key terms. His place-thinking reclaims “the manner in which we humans are on the earth” (Heidegger, *Poetry* 145) proclaiming a relationship of being as being in the world through “dwelling”. Dwelling is considered to be a mode of existence, “being on the earth”, augmented by the principles of “sparing and preserving” in relation to the experiential framework he names the fourfold; earth, sky, divinities and mortals (Heidegger, *Poetry* 145, 147). The complex character he attributes to dwelling gives a multi-dimensionality to place that goes beyond the human perspective of being in place, to manifest a way of dwelling that can be characterized as a dynamic presencing of the fourfold, of the relationship between the individual and the spatial parameters which define human being.

In clarifying the relationship between place and space, place and being, Heidegger considers the etymological origins of the term space, originating from the word Raum, which “means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging”, a notion of space as “something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary” (*Poetry* 152). He deploys the term ‘location’ to inscribe a sense of the ‘lived’ dimensionality of place, for dwelling occurs in and through place

⁴² This essay is reprinted in *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

rather than space. Indeed spaces become places, are transformed through being opened up, according to Heidegger, “by the fact that they are let into the dwelling of man” a consideration which links being and dwelling with the fourfold, “through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations” (*Poetry* 154-155). In fact he locates ‘being’ as being in the world through dwelling. What is revealed in this questioning of being, can be glimpsed not only in the term he turns to, ‘Dasein’, but in the orientation of being through the fourfold.

Dwelling, according to Heidegger, concerns care, where being goes beyond being in itself, towards being-for-others. Dwelling is to linger, to stay with in a relation of nearness. This is a productive relationship with place, however, which is given further consideration as a way of responding to the fourfold in his essay, “... *Poetically Man Dwells ...*” in which building is considered to be a response to the fourfold.⁴³ Although it is not my intention to provide an exhaustive account of Heideggerian thinking, the principles by which he seeks to understand being enacts a dialogue in which the experience of being is constituted in close proximity to place. The complex locutions of the meaning of being and dwelling are revealed at work through poetry. The question of dwelling calls for a depth of connection that Heidegger seeks through the vicissitudes of the fourfold. This is re-examined through the evocative language in “... *Poetically Man Dwells ...*” as this is his response for creatively engaging with ways of expressing what it means to be present (here and now), to be in place, by re-thinking the ontology of dwelling as a work of poetics. He writes,

poetic dwelling is a dwelling ‘on this earth’. ... Poetry does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling. (*Poetry* 216)

It is through making, poiesis, that the notion of dwelling is imaginatively deployed as a way of engaging with the conditions which ground dwelling. As we are ground dwellers, the poetic is not disengaged from the actualities which condition place but

⁴³ This essay is reprinted in *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

rather emerges from how we makes sense of, and ground ourselves. Heidegger considers that poetry or the poetic, needs to approach “its *relation* to this dwelling” (my emphasis) in a way that connects identity and belonging, with a sense/ethos of care for the earth which grounds dwelling and from which dwelling derives (*Poetry* 213). He continues by arguing that a poetics of dwelling is not a “relation of dominance” (*Poetry* 213). Appropriation of the ground by which dwelling is conventionally characterized is not the intention underpinning the poetic response, but rather a process of dwelling that connects to the dimensions of spatial existence, encompassing the ontological realm “of the between: the upward to the sky as well as the downward earth” (Heidegger, *Poetry* 220). It is through these dimensions that being (as well as dwelling, building, thinking) arises. For Heidegger the dimensions of the fourfold takes/makes it measure by bringing together “in a concentrated perception, a gathered taking-in, that remains a listening” (*Poetry* 221). This ethos can be linked to his consideration that “we must pay heed to the kind of taking here, which does not consist in a clutching or any other kind of grasping, but rather in a letting come of what has been dealt out” (Heidegger, *Poetry* 221).

These are also concerns which are given consideration in the work of Carter where there is a particular overlap of similar areas pertaining to poetry/the poetic, dwelling and ground. In the opening remarks to Carter’s *Lie of the Land* he raises the issue of dwelling and the built environment (discussed also by Heidegger) by considering approaches towards dwelling in Australia. According to Carter,

The house we are so inclined to fetishize, locating within its purlieus that sense of place that lends us our identity and dignity – that intimation of the cosmic in the intimate...never touches down. We live in our places off the ground; and,..., we idolize the picturesqueness of places because we sense our ungroundedness, the fragility of our claim on the soil. Our carefully enclosed and ornamented places, with their artillery of hedges, views, roads, boundaries and horizons, grow out of the sacrifice of the ground and are, in this sense, non-places. (*Lie* 2)

Although, there are rhetorical similarities between Carter and Heidegger, their positions are somewhat at odds. Carter’s perspective and politics is shaped by the

contexts underpinning the contemporary social and cultural milieu in Australia. Even though he invokes a sense of poetic dwelling through an echo of the fourfold, he can find no trace of Heideggerian dwelling around him as this has become supplanted instead by building “non-places”.⁴⁴ It is evident that an unstable relationship with place exists, and one which differs to the modern spatial experience outlined by Heidegger. This surfaces through acknowledging “the fragility of our claim” and brings ideas of dwelling into a postcolonial context in which this idea gathers further problems and complexities in relation to issues of land, settling, belonging and identity (*Lie 2*).

Carter identifies an estranged relationship to the land inherent in the ways that ‘we’ not only build places but also the strategy of clearing which becomes far removed from that of Heidegger’s thesis in which building was for the purpose of bringing forth being. Instead, for Carter the relationship between being and dwelling corresponds to that of smoothing over, flattening out surfaces “to lay our foundations on rationally-apprehensible level ground” (*Lie 2*). The foundations upon which “[o]ur homes” are built are considered by Carter to be

tumuli erected over the slaughtered body of the giant ground. ... our preoccupation with property give us away. The monumentality of the places we create ... is an attempt to arrest the ground, to prevent it slipping away from under our feet (*Lie 2*).

He seeks to illuminate an approach for dwelling which need not be permanently fixed, un-grounded or in constant motion but a poetics which paradoxically combines dwelling and traveling, a process in which being becomes grounded, at home, while in a state of moving. In recognizing the political and philosophical implications of “our own cultural disposition” tied to ownership of the land through its appropriation in ways that “arrest” and “secure place” (*Lie 2*) Carter calls for a responsive mode of engagement, that I read as being ethically and ecologically sensitive, able to negotiate what he writes of as “that in-between ground, where stability is a function of measured motion” (*Lie 3*). As an eco-poetics dwelling-in-motion becomes a

⁴⁴ In Marc Auge’s analysis of non-places, these are conceptualised as the places we transit through, in the sense of stepping over.

provocation which Carter poses “to anyone prepared to traverse the ground in different directions” (*Lie* 3). This process, however, also involves negotiating the anxiety which characterizes the grounds of cultural politics in a postcolonial environment, symptomatic of inhabiting a place that is not “ours” but the kith and kin of Aboriginal people. The instability which pervades the Australian context is deployed in Carter’s strategic approach as a process which calls for a re-consideration of the spatial relationship between self, dwelling and ground. He asserts that,

[t]he approach must be poetic rather than philosophical. For restoration of the ground does not mean treading it down more firmly or replacing it; it means releasing it for movement – in the same way that metre or speech pattern releases language for movement. (*Lie* 5)

The metaphorical and literal recovery of a sense of relating to and with the Australian landscape is put to work through poiesis, understood here in the combined sense of poetry and poetic ways of moving. For both Heidegger and Carter there is poetry to be realized in the process of dwelling which emerges through the measure of movement, and a sensuous engagement with grounding spatial experience rhythmically, sensitively, dynamically. Carter’s consideration of dwelling is a search for ways of entering into a relationship with the lie of the land which would re-imagine the ‘surface’ upon which we ground our being through a different process aligned to that of an “environmentally-grounded poetics” (*Lie* 5). The approach he has in mind would, “avoid compacting the ground, rendering it another stable point of departure, we need to tread it lightly, circumspectly” (*Lie* 5). This sensitivity towards the ground, not only re-imagines a different process of engagement to/with places, but also re-claims the ground as a place which is often overlooked, philosophically disciplined as a “bedrock reality” (*Lie* 3). Critically Carter addresses our relationship to the ground, asking what it is to be grounded, when this dimension can never be settled. In re-conceptualizing dwelling as a dialogical movement, he reconsiders the role of “that fundamental surface that seems to inform every dimension of our oneiric, physiological and architectural fantasy” as both question and strategy (*Lie* 3).

From this discussion, Heidegger and Carter's ways of thinking relate to the concept of dwelling through modes of response which I believe can be useful for theoretical and artistic contexts. For me, they enhance a way of thinking about the notion of place and approaches towards place-making as the grounds on which human being/s live. Heidegger's contemplation of dwelling raises questions regarding human beings relationships to place in the context of the built environment. His response can be read as a critique of the conditions of modern life and modes of dwelling that fragment what he believed to be a sense of authentic dwelling in the 20th century. This is represented in his example of a specific place such as the Norwegian farmhouse located in the middle of the mountains, which he considered to embody a sense of belonging and rootedness (Paek 1348). It is important to keep in mind that Heidegger's response emerged at a key moment in time when there were growing concerns for human beings lack of meaningful interaction with the built world and the conditions of modern life that did not, in his view, reflect authentic dwelling. Carter's response further develops the thematic and conceptual relevance of dwelling within an Australian contemporary framework, wherein he seeks to explore the grounds of a 'spatial history' of this country as a critical strategy "for recovering a relationship with the landscape in our dwellings through the poetry of movement, or the movement of poetry" (Crouch 44-45). His approach toward ideas of dwelling and dwellings in Australia are ways of poetically disclosing (releasing) the truths of what matters in this land which call for working towards a sense of being at home by dwelling in motion.

In conclusion, configurations of dwelling must accommodate differing perspectives as part of understanding the conceptual development of dwelling, and how this relates to contemporary ways of thinking about and making sense of place. This means recognising the relationship between an abstract idea or concept and the modes and methods that develop a sense of place, for as Arif Dirlik explains, "places are not given, but produced by human activity, which implies that how we imagine and conceive places is a historical problem" (15). The philosophical and poetic concepts I have discussed in this chapter inform the framework of analysis that is part of my approach towards place-making in performance. Living and making art in the 21st century necessitates making connections to place in ways that aim to develop a deeper and more sensitive awareness of place in our present global context. It is

clear to me that part of the critical work of a poetics of place is to enter into a dialogue with the question of how performance addresses experiences of place through modes of dwelling. Experiences of dwelling form part of my critique of place, as I develop modes of response, with which to read and translate the differential terrain upon which we are implaced. This is what I set out to explore in this thesis by way of approach that is phenomenological, topological, and embodied.

Chapter 2
Triple Alice: Desert Medi(t)ations

In Australia there is ongoing debate about the land and how to inhabit it. This debate inflames issues of belonging, identity and the politics of location, in an attempt to reflect and influence ways of seeing the land and peoples connections to it. These are issues that inform the work of writers such as Paul Carter who laments, with traces of Heideggerian poetics, that “[w]e do not walk with the surface; we do not align our lives with its inclines, folds and pockets” (*Lie* 2). The ambiguity which characterizes the Australian condition is measured in terms of an incompatibility between non-indigenous people and the land. It is also evident in our contested relationship with the environment engendered as a lack of awareness to the changes which are required on the ground. In the words of George Seddon, “[b]eing Australian in the sense of belonging to the land has always depended on an acquired skill. It is neither a right nor a given; it has always had to be learnt” (240). What needs to be learned (or re-learned, because now forgotten) is a form of cultural adaptation to living *with* “the physical realities of an old unyielding land” (Seddon 240).⁴⁵ Living in Australia entails an experience which is “internally *disharmonious* and culturally contradictory” (G. Jones 3, original emphasis). In this country a particularly fraught relationship to place exists because of the complex history of the land and of the ways in which the land has been mapped, conquered, controlled, and misappropriated.⁴⁶ The complexities underpinning these debates have taken on new inflections amidst growing concerns for ecologically and ethically grounded responses towards the Australian landscape.⁴⁷

These concerns have become fertile ground for Performance Studies with artists investigating perceptions of the environment and the nature of dwelling in the landscape. This is a growing area of inquiry, in Australia and other places around the world, with new directions being charted for the terrain of performance that aim to challenge how we might, as part of a global culture (in the west at least), live and connect with our place, and develop new ways of seeing and knowing it.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Seddon adds that, for Australian Aborigines this “has always been a title to be earned, and so it remains” (240).

⁴⁶ The postcolonial condition in Australia is characterized through a spatial vocabulary which attests to such ambiguity. Recent publications in contemporary performance deal explicitly with the complex nature of spatial experience in Australia. See McAuley, *Unstable*; and Joanne Tompkins.

⁴⁷ For example, see John Cameron.

⁴⁸ For further discussion on this area, see Nigel Stewart; Nala Walla; and also Wendy Arons and Theresa J. May, which examine some of the intersections between performance and the environment.

In thinking about the issues highlighted above, in this chapter I engage with an Australian case study of performance research known as the *Triple Alice* project.⁴⁹ Through an analysis of this project, I examine the role of embodied cultural practice and reflect on its contribution towards ways of rethinking our interactions with the environment. As I mentioned in the Introduction, the influence of the *Triple Alice* project to my own development as a performer, after 12 years, still continues to inveigle.⁵⁰ The experience of participating in the Body Weather workshop in *Triple Alice I* can be considered the catalyst and prime motivator for undertaking further research into concepts of inhabitation (dwelling in place/s) as the work deeply affected my perception and understanding of what it can mean to be in place.

The ways in which Body Weather practice proposes a unique understanding of the body-place interrelationship informs my analysis in this chapter. I draw on the perspectives of several other participants to further develop an insight into the role of embodied perception in this project and some of the affects arising from it. My experience as a participant contributes to the theoretical positioning of this chapter in terms of the kinds of issues and questions the project raised for me, and, which can now be read as a critical map to theoretically furnish the following discussion and enable a consideration of some implications of the work in light of these questions.⁵¹

The *Triple Alice* project was conceived by choreographer and dancer Tess de Quincey as an ongoing series of three fora and laboratories in the Central Desert of Australia. The project was carried out over a three year period (1999, 2000, 2001), the purpose being “to draw on a fertile bed of cross-cultural, interdisciplinary practice from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous traditions in relation to the central

⁴⁹ The influence of the *Triple Alice* project extends throughout Australia and to other countries around the world. Although the effects/affects of the project may be uneven and difficult to measure, it has proved to be a compelling experience for many who participated and a rich area of inquiry claimed and interpreted in many different ways. For a comprehensive understanding of the impact of this project for those who participated and the numerous forms of writing that resulted in an attempt to understand the nature and significance of this event, see Dunn; Grant.

⁵⁰ I have written about my first experience with Body Weather in my Honours thesis, outlining the historical context, philosophy underpinning the practice and the range of exercises designed to modify perception and bodily experience undertaken in the sandy environs of The Pinnacles. I discussed my experience as a participant of *Triple Alice I* at, “*The Regions Beyond: Australian Creative Expatriation Reconsidered, Conference and Literary Event*”, 16-17 April, 2001, in an attempt to begin to understand and articulate the affect of this work as a mode of critique. See Pryce, *Triple*.

⁵¹ There are a collection of participant accounts of the *Triple Alice* project which feature in 2003 *About Performance 5*.

heartland of Australia”. At the core of the project was a provocation, a call to respond, to “engage with the nature of artistic practice for the new millennium”, a challenge put forward by de Quincey that would “take the Central Desert as fundamental in its mapping of the future of artistic, cultural and media practice” in Australia (*Alice*). This place, according to de Quincey, exists as an ontological necessity. In her words, it is a “burning point, geographically, culturally and politically ... the confronting heartbeat of the continent” (de Quincey qtd. in Grant and de Quincey 247).

According to landscape historian Simon Schama, “[b]efore it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock” (6-7). Schama elaborates how perception of landscape is a process that is, “conditioned by the cultural myths that have come to surround groups of natural features and the connotations they carry for us”. This process informs the ways in which landscape comes to be perceived and how particular landscapes enter into cultural consciousness. Although Schama writes about the landscapes embedded in the “European consciousness” his perspective supports a way of thinking about how particular landscapes exist in the Australian consciousness, and more importantly, the images they invoke, for this is linked to the meanings and values through which people make sense of the landscape and their place in it.⁵²

In 1999 I traveled by aero-plane from Perth to Alice Springs to participate in *Triple Alice 1*, the first ‘ripple’ of the *Triple Alice* project. It was my intention to undertake the rigorous training workshop of the Body Weather laboratory.⁵³ The brochure for the 3-week workshop provided some geographical coordinates for participants, “the landscape 100 km north west of Alice Springs”, contextualized by (what were to my mind) rather esoteric notions of the work proposing an investigation of desert space through the body. The aim of the workshop was to “encourage sensory and

⁵² These ideas are examined in Haynes.

⁵³ I have had some experience in Body Weather and Butoh training through workshops facilitated by Australian practitioners. My honours thesis explored some of the teachings of Body Weather as a practical framework for considering ideas about space, place and embodiment in the context of contemporary performance. I had participated in two ‘intensive’ workshops facilitated by Tess de Quincey prior to my participation as a workshop participant in *Triple Alice 1*.

experiential mappings of space ... so as to give participants the possibility to engage in a strong relation to the desert environment” (de Quincey, *Alice*).

At the time I was confronted with the realization that I had a rather limited cultural back-pack of mixed associations of the desert to draw on. Essentially, I was carrying a repertoire of cultural clichés and understandings born not from immediate experience but rather inscribed into memory through a rudimentary education in colonial Australian history. Nothing, however quite prepared me for the shock I experienced on stepping out of the plane. I was confronted with an immediate visceral, prickling sensation of the body being made porous through the intense heat, the drawing down of energy and absorption of the body’s moisture out into the atmosphere. This bodily experience was further intensified by an awareness of the tangible presence resonating from the deep red earth of the desert landscape. The immense energy of this land seemed to have a pulse, moving on a vibrational level. In encountering the über-aesthetics of desert space, the vast sense of scale, the striking contrast of iron-oxide earth meeting blue expansive sky, I felt overwhelmed. The felt perceptible sense of the material reality of this landscape was at odds with the desert I held in my mind. This was the first step in being initiated into a complex and revealing process of engagement with place.



Fig. 1. Hamilton Downs Station

The location for the project was Hamilton Downs Station, a remotely situated homestead 110 kilometers north-west of Alice Springs.⁵⁴ It functioned as a temporary home base for those who participated during the three weeks of the project, with the work unfolding nearby in and around the semi-arid country of the Central Australian Desert.⁵⁵ The nature of the work in *Triple Alice 1* was experimental, a laboratory for research, with an emphasis on exploring ways of being in and embodying a relationship with place.

Triple Alice 1 brought together a diverse group of people from many different backgrounds and cultures from across Australia and around the world. Although most people had undertaken the journey to Hamilton Downs primarily to participate in the Body Weather workshop, concurrent with the workshop was a writer's laboratory (there were writers and theorists from several universities) as well as a

⁵⁴ Hamilton Downs Station was an ideal location for the project's practical necessities. The homestead's facilities included a bunkhouse area for sleeping, toilet/shower facilities, as well as a kitchen and eating area. I am aware that performance theorists Stuart Grant and Jane Goodall have explored ideas of this place in terms of its historical value and meanings. They read Hamilton Downs as a place with visible traces of the past providing evidence of its pastoral context and the ways in which the place functioned in the surrounding country. For more information see Grant; Grant and de Quincey; J. Goodall.

⁵⁵ Although the number of people at *Triple Alice 1* fluctuated throughout the duration of the three weeks there were approximately 85 people at one point taking part in the laboratory.

laboratory for visual artists. Coming and going throughout the event were guest visitors such as meteorologists, rangers, historians, botanists, politicians and musicians. Integral to the logistics of the program were macrobiotic chefs, web coordinators and a small team of support staff attending to the administration of the event. Leading the event was de Quincey who also facilitated the Body Weather workshop. The structure of the event was indeed complex with numerous activities and fora punctuating the daily program of the three laboratories. However, it was the Body Weather workshop which formed the core of *Triple Alice 1*.

Body Weather is both a dance and performance training founded by Min Tanaka and his Performance Company (Mai-Juku) in Japan. Tanaka began dancing in the 1960s and has continued to work in Japan and internationally performing and directing around the world. The philosophy underpinning his practice is best described in an often quoted passage in which Tanaka says, “people talked about dance coming from the inside, but I thought the dance had to come from outside and meet inside, ... I wanted to go deep outside my body” (Stein and Tanaka 5). Tanaka’s work can be considered an extended meditation on the relationship between the body, space and place. He proposes that the atmosphere of the exterior environment is channelled through the body and the body in turn is moved by its surroundings (becoming the dance).⁵⁶

De Quincey trained in Body Weather from 1985-1991 within the context of Tanaka’s Body Weather farm in the village of Hakushu in Japan and was also a member of Mai-Juku. His work continues to have an enduring impact on de Quincey who introduced Body Weather into Australia in 1988, adapting the practice to the Australian environment.⁵⁷ De Quincey’s work is an investigation into concepts of inhabitation with her research and performance work taking place in different environments shifting between the city and the desert.

⁵⁶ Tanaka’s work from the 1970s is considered to be his most provocative as he travelled throughout Japan dancing solo in many different places of the country. He often danced naked with the performances taking place in urban environments and natural settings.

⁵⁷ de Quincey has continued to explore the practice within the context of the Australian situation, investigating concepts of inhabitation in relation to a broad range of environments, such as the urban centres of city landscapes as well as ancient landscapes; Lake Mungo in New South Wales being a particular example of her work in the open space of the Australian landscape. De Quincey’s investigation of place through performance has been well documented, for example see Edward Scheer.

Body Weather continues to develop and evolve both as a practice and in its uses and applications as an art form. TDQ proposes the practice as relevant to anyone as it is an open-ended inquiry into the body (*Alice*). As part of this strategy, the practice encompasses a highly physical training system which offers a perspective for understanding the body and space as fundamentally interconnected. The training promotes embodied and perceptual strategies for observing and exploring “the body as an environment within a greater environment”. The ethos underpinning the training, “embraces and builds on concepts of environment” to cultivate an awareness of the body in correspondence with its environmental milieu constantly undergoing a process of change “inside and outside” (de Quincey, *Alice*). Exploring ways in which the body and the environment are interconnected is an explicit dimension of the training and has, in recent years, received critical attention and extended analysis by practitioners, critics and theorists. The extent and importance of the ecological thinking embedded in the practice brings to the fore the indivisible relationship between nature and the nature of human habitation.

Investigating Body Weather practice in the desert environment was a sophisticated experiment that aimed to open up a ‘dialogue’ between participant and place grounding the nature of this experience in an “intensely embodied and emplaced” relationship with the place itself (McAuley, *Introduction* vii). The following section provides an analysis of this process.

The structure of the daily training program consisted of three interrelated areas of inquiry “designed to strengthen, release and sensitise the participant both mentally and physically” (de Quincey, *Alice*). Session one, called ‘MB’ (muscles/bones or mind/body), was targeted towards developing both strength and stamina through a rigorous 2-hour workout. This was undertaken in the early morning (7:30-9:45 am) and involved participants as a group negotiating a complex ensemble of choreographic movements while moving up and down a raked pitch of sand in the landscape. Bodily boundaries were pushed to their limits through a combination of high impact aerobic exercises and anerobic movement sequences. The work was exhausting, both mentally and physically, and was experienced by many of the participants as a process of becoming thoroughly discombobulated as well as disorientated. The intention of the training, according to de Quincey, was to

overcome physical and mental resistance, a provocation intended as “an attack on the ego” (Dunn 37). Many of the movements in the M/B radically altered the hierarchical organization of mind and body. This part of the training disrupted the mind as the centre of the self. This was achieved by targeting the relationship between different parts of the body by challenging how each part (of the body) connects and relates to each other. This is further elaborated by participant, Peter Snow who writes about the M/B as “a deliberate strategy to renegotiate, threaten and even undermine boundaries between minds and bodies, between parts of bodies, and between bodies and other bodies.” As he sees it, this is the first phase of a process “of mediating between individual and group, subject and object, nature and culture, both in training and as a performative strategy and aesthetic” (P4 52). In this sense, the M/B aims to break down the structures of acculturated conditioning, de-programming habitual ways of relating to and perceiving body and self, self and other, body and space/ place.

The proprioception systems of the body are integral to how we ascertain our positioning in space (and experience our body as unified, whole and coherent) – which way we experience up and down, and where different parts of our bodies are in relation to other parts. This is mostly a subconscious process which requires an imagining of the body or what Moira Gatens conceives of as a “psychical body ... if we are to have motility in the world – without it we would not be intentional subjects” (148). However, I became acutely aware during this section of the training how everyday actions and movements that are continually repeated over time, lead to and uphold a particular imagined picture of the body (as whole, unified and coherent). Embodying the physical exercises and movements of the M/B posed a challenge to many of the participants habitual ways of moving, bodily coordination and balance as it destabilised the process by which perception connects to the imagining and embodying of corporeal intentionality.



Fig. 2. Body Weather Participants engaging in an ‘M/B’ session⁵⁸

The intensity of the workout was felt deep inside the body and had the affect of compressing the muscles and bones (bringing the body’s centre of gravity downwards (to the earth)). A massive amount of energy was generated by the participants during the ‘MB’ and this was further intensified by the increasing temperature of desert heat and red dust being stirred up as participants moved across the desert floor. During the workout de Quincey stressed an embodied relationship with place, involving the crown of the head and the sky, the soles of the feet and the ground. This emphasized an awareness of the environment as an important influence in the process of mediation. Participants were also encouraged to consciously explore the parameters of bodily *being* in relation to the environment by scanning the horizon and focusing on locales within the landscape while engaging with each movement and exercise. This visual connection not only occurred by looking with the eyes but also by re-locating sight to a different part of the body, so that in effect, participants were looking out at points in the surrounding landscape with their knees or elbows. This approach opened up the muscular systems of the body enabling participants to access and further extend seeing and being in relation to the environment.

After the ‘MB’ there was a brief break, followed by the second session of the training called, ‘Manipulations’. This session went for approximately one and a half hours taking place beneath a shaded wooden structure in the landscape. By mid-

⁵⁸ Further images of Triple Alice are available at dequinceyco.net

morning conditions became increasingly hot and dry with the desert temperature 'heating up' as the day wore on. Participants worked with a partner through a series of challenging postures to stretch and extend bodily comprehension. In contradistinction to the high impact of the 'MB' which had the effect of muscular compression, the manipulations decompressed those high pressure areas of the body, through a fluid process of breathing, and the physical transference of weight from 'manipulator' to 'manipulated'. It is important to cast aside the psychological implications of these terms, however, as the work was carried out as a dialogical exchange between partners to foster an awareness of the process of change. Snow points out that "the whole group is encouraged to progress in unison" (168). A sense of a group body is further developed by building a collective rhythm of breathing. As both manipulator and manipulated, it is a shared process practised so as to render bodies open to a notion of relationship which is about becoming receptive to the endless possibilities of affect and modification in relation to other beings, other bodies and other influences.

Practised as a sequence of "pressure applications" (Snow 167) the role of the breath is important in working through and resolving any "body issues" that might surface between partners (168). In each partnership there was an opportunity to be sensitive to the many different facets and influences of the body – the degree of flexibility, weight, height as well as injuries - influenced my approach and degree of pressure. With practice, the Manipulations foreground a process of working with the body and the body of others that can foster what Tanaka terms, "establishing a relationship of infinite influences". In light of the ecological thinking that underpins Body Weather practice as I have mentioned above ideas of inter-dependence and relatedness are foregrounded in the Manipulations.

In terms of understanding the shifting nature of relationship in this area of the training I believe it is useful to consider the idea of the body as an atmospheric pressure system, like the weather of the environment. As a changing situation, weather is both affective and effective, influencing the nature of change. In this respect the participant begins to experience the body as embodying a relationship with change. The use of 'weather' here is more than a metaphorical understanding and needs to be recognized as substantive in terms of integrating a sense of body as

weather and weather as body. Understandings of ‘weather’ within the context of Body Weather practice are evident within the performance vocabularies and languages used to express a sense of the contextual interaction of body, mind and world. The different ways of interpreting ‘weather’ is an aspect that is further elaborated by Snow in describing multiple readings of this term. Although we may understand how, “climate, as one interpretation of ‘weather’, indicates another resonance, and that is as milieu, the prevailing surroundings, the changing and evolving situations in which we find ourselves”, it can also be used as a way of interpreting “ecosystem; that is, as all the processes of nature, the fauna and flora and how they interact in complex cycles of exchange in the natural world” (P4 53).



Fig. 3. Exercises from the ‘Manipulations’ session of the Body Weather training component

In the afternoon, participants commenced the third session of the training, undertaking several hours of what was called ‘Groundwork’. Participants worked in the landscape informed by exercises which framed ways of seeing and being-in-place, an open inquiry designed to radically alter perception and bodily experience. Although it is impossible to provide a complete account of all of the corporeal exercises, activities and modalities explored during this session I will briefly discuss a few. These explorations were particularly suggestive for they revealed a less anthropocentric view of the world and raised questions concerning what it means to inhabit the environment.

One of the exercises called 'Bisoku', involved walking at different speeds in the landscape, for example at 1 mm per second and 1 cm per second. This exercise estranges the ordinary everyday function of walking as all of the body engages with 'becoming' variations of speed. Through this process the participant's experience of the body shifts into a different relationship calling into question the function of both time and space as embodied consciousness registers infinitesimal scales and degrees of being in the environment. Experiencing molecular activity at this scale and speed brings awareness into a subliminal relationship with the environment as this level of perception breaks open a kind of phantasmagoric plenitude in which time and space become physical dimensions radically altering the experience of the body. In this way the body is activated, becoming em-bodied, a function of the spatial and temporal dimensions mutually constitutive of experience. The work opens up an in-between space for imagining against the symbolic. As a phenomenological structure of experience the process can be translated as a way of reading below the 'surface' of a world which, ordinarily we would step over. Exploring embodiment through the capacities of perception and response became a way of questioning how human beings engage with dwelling, with being in the landscape.

This relationship was further explored in another exercise, through a more 'rooted' engagement between the participant and the environment. The placement of awareness was explored in depth with participants in situ observing particular aspects in the landscape, such as rocks, trees, clouds, a blade of grass, a patch of ground or sky. This process of observation became a portal to perception involving all of the senses in embodying or 'becoming' the particular form in the landscape. In observing a specific feature of the desert terrain the apertures of perception began to shift with embodied consciousness 'tuning in' to nuances of scale, density, texture, energy and gravity. Dwelling in near immobility in the landscape, I became aware of the tangible, bio-dynamic nature of the environment. Perceiving shifts of energy at an anatomical level altered the embodied process of being in place, constituting a localized and yet shifting experience of the landscape. Although physically 'anchored', bodily position was not fixed as a static point-of-view. Rather, the act of observation was practiced as a corporeal activity, a way of opening new channels of perception. This dynamic relationship between self and place rendered perceived boundaries between self and localized space fluid and contingent as the process of

becoming (a plant, a rock, a grain of sand) involved a mode of being open and receptive to the environment.⁵⁹



Fig. 4. Workshop participant engaged in a ‘Groundwork’ exercise

The exercise which had the greatest impact for me was the blindfold work, an exercise which involved working in partners, with one person leading the other in an exploration of the environment. Being (temporarily) visually impaired immediately opened up a whole other world and highlighted the primacy of vision, along with our dependence on this sense, in everyday life for balance, bodily position, movement, direction and orientation through space. Removing the use of sight invoked a sense of being in space that called for a reconsideration of somatic sensations. The next stage of this exercise involved working from memory, in terms of how we had been affected by what we had come into contact with (recalling sensory nuances of touch, taste, sound, pressure) engaging sense-specific, tactile and spatial remembering and then re-embodying this experience. This became the basis of works-in-progress amongst the participants. Being sensitive to these memories was an important part of the work. One of the participants, Sarah Dunn, notes in her analysis of this exercise that it “felt like brain development and memory improvement” and that it “had the effect of bringing one into a higher level of awareness of ourselves and our immediate environment that did not exist previously” (Dunn 41). In reconfiguring the interrelationship between the senses this exercise yielded a complexly nuanced

⁵⁹ This sense of openness, of embodied being opening through a process of dwelling, shares an affinity with Bachelard’s phenomenology of the imagination. His poetics of dwelling describes a porous “dialectics of inside and outside”, a “consciousness of being” that “radiates immobility” (222).

experience of place. It was also significant for the way in which it re-scripted the participants' perception of desert terrain through a tactile approach reshaping the landscape into an experience of contact, proximity and intimacy.⁶⁰



Fig. 5. Workshop participant (Larissa Pryce) working from sense-memory

Although there were a range of exercises undertaken during the 'Groundwork' session, each exercise would commence with de Quincey's simple directive, "find a space." Space in this context became a frame from which the exploration would unfold. Dunn, in her analysis of the work, writes that "[s]pace was continually being re-framed, shifted, repositioned within the larger working space" (34) a process which occurred whether working as an individual, in partners or in groups. This continual process of re-positioning created a sense of a multiply-defined space of experience. Embodying temporary viewpoints as a structure for practice opened up the participant's field of perception to an experience of heterogeneity in which the surrounding environs became co-implicated in constituting vision. This shifting framework conditioned the process of spatial experience rendering space particular, transforming space into place, albeit in a provisional sense through the contingent nature of the participant's embodied situation in the landscape.

⁶⁰ Participants were each given a computer disk and requested to keep a daily log of their experiences by responding to several questions that aimed to 'measure' levels of bodily speed, energy, and temperature as a way of gauging how these bodily parameters changed throughout the day. These responses were uploaded to the *Triple Alice* website by web technicians who were based at Hamilton Downs. There were also discussions that followed some of the exercises during the daily Body Weather workshop and this provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on particular aspects of their localised investigations in place. Many of these discussions were documented by audio-visual technicians.

The Groundwork sessions were also framed by time so that a sense of duration became a significant element in structuring and co-producing spatial experience. This was communicated through the sound of de Quincey's wooden clacker to signal to participants the end of each particular exploration. Marking time through sound seemed to ritualize the nature of the work. With this emphasis, work as a 'task'⁶¹ began to shift towards something else, (with the work encoded with a different level of significance) work as significant, experiential and replete with meaning. According to de Quincey, the parameters of the frame were considered to be a safeguard for exploration, "[b]ecause there is a very clear agreement, you can take it on, enter into it, try it on, because basically it is a safe space of research" (Dunn 35). The use of space and time to structure the exploration process enabled the participant's perception of place to focus on deepening the experience of embodying a spatial relationship in the desert landscape.

Critical Reflections

Although each session of the training deployed different strategies to reconfigure ways of being in and seeing the desert landscape, they can be seen together as interrelated components of an investigation into what it can mean (potentially) to dwell in place. Experiencing the ebb and flow of activity in each component builds toward a sense of a dynamic and fluid process of dwelling. I find that it is Casey's notion of "implacement" as a way of thinking about place, which corresponds with the ideas of dwelling physically explored in the training program. Casey illuminates embodied being as being in place, a concept involving body and place as mutually constitutive in creating and experiencing each other. According to Casey "our most engaged experiences of being-in-place" (*Fate* 342) involve the body. It is through being in place that "space attains poignancy and plenitude" (*Fate* 342). The displacing of the 'M/B', the re-placing of the 'Manipulations' and the em-placing of the 'Groundwork' seemed to prepare the participant for an experience of implacement, through explorations I have characterized as intense, immersive, active, sensory, and transforming. The question of implacement becomes actualized in/realized through

⁶¹ Geographer Tim Ingold uses the term, "taskscape" to explicate a way of thinking about landscape which "denote[s] a pattern of dwelling activities." This notion shares a certain resonance with a "building perspective", interrelated to a "dwelling perspective" but prior to it (189 – 208).

the training as more than a simplistic concept or idea, as being-in-place involves processes of negotiation, exchange, observation and participation. Inhabiting place is an ongoing process, both for Casey and in the context of Body Weather.

The ways in which place is practiced, experienced and embodied suggests particular implications for the ways in which relationships between body and place come to be thought about (and the language used to articulate aspects of the practice). Casey reaffirms dwelling as central to human experience, a historical project generating and continually changing in meaning and value. He describes succinctly a situation of being in place through a passage that reflects the relationship between body and place as I experienced it during the Body Weather laboratory:

In my embodied being I am just at a place at its inner boundary; a surrounding landscape, on the other hand, is just beyond that place as its outer boundary. Between the two boundaries — and very much as a function of their differential interplay — emplacement occurs. Place is what takes place between body and landscape. (Casey, *Getting* 29)

However, the affect and effect of the interplay between body and place in Body Weather invokes a depth of experience difficult to imagine (for those unfamiliar with the practice) much less constitute through semantic production. Place in emplacement is the ‘space between’. This is not a vacuous, empty space, but an incoming and outgoing tide of constant becoming that activates history, memory and relation. Emplacement is not an end result, it occurs, but it is not definitive. The Body Weather practice is an interrogation into how emplacement is meaningful through an embodied relationship with place. It is essentially phenomenological using experiential and sensory modalities as a questioning of the world as it is given. Meaning is not a by-product of the practice, rather, meaning is configured through doing, as practice is configured for use, meaning is in the work. Body Weather is an intervention into ways of thinking, experiencing and imagining how emplacement can potentially occur. The liminal framework of the training pushes the boundaries of

embodied being and renders porous the boundary perceived to exist between ‘body and landscape’.⁶²

Landscape has functioned historically as a particular mode of representation, shaping ways in which the Australian landscape has come to be perceived. The relationship of representation to place reveals an historical legacy of occularcentricism, fixing the frame of perception from the standpoint of the viewing subject. The imperialism implicit in this point of view produced a sense of separation between self and the landscape. Landscape developed as a pictorial mode, an aesthetic discourse affecting ways of thinking about and reading landscape.⁶³ To this way of thinking, framing landscape as a picture asserts a teleology of homogeneity and the dominance of vision. This perspective suggests not only a spatial history of control and containment but also a dissonance in the actual experiencing of landscape. Erwin Panofsky in his consideration of space in *Perspective as Symbolic Form* argues this point:

For it is not only the effect of perspectival construction, but indeed its intended purpose, to realise in the representation of space precisely that homogeneity and boundlessness foreign to the direct experience of space.
(30-1)

Performance practices, such as Body Weather, deploy strategies which modulate the field of perception to produce an experience of space which is contingent, fluid, fluent and process-oriented rather than fixed, discovered once and for all. The emphasis is on relation rather than representation. Frames are deployed in the practice, but the intention is to build a relationship between self and place through a self-reflexive approach based on critically questioning one’s position in space as an ongoing dialogue.

⁶² This raises the question of how the spectator experiences the relationship between body and landscape. Although *Triple Alice 1* was not a performance as such, observing the body at work was as much a process for the participant as it was for those watching depending on the level of their own investment or contribution to the laboratory.

⁶³ For more details on this see Simon Ryan.

In *Body Weather*, being in place requires an ongoing commitment by the participant towards questioning deeply held assumptions and beliefs attached to ways of perceiving the landscape enculturated through familiarity. The training, as I have mentioned previously, renders the habitual strange and continuously clears away the basis for the development of any habits. In a sense the body undergoes a process of being emptied out, an approach to promote openness as the basis of dwelling. This process is described by Tanaka as “evacuating one’s own body”, rendering the interior of the body empty, a necessity to discovering new ways of being (qtd. in J. Goodall 117). In this state of voiding, the interior of the body becomes similar to a high pressure system that responds by drawing in the atmospheric energy of its surrounds. It is at this point that the logic of inside and outside loses its hold in terms of conventional meaning as boundaries become porous.⁶⁴

The permeable nature of this relationship between inside and outside ignites the imagination of phenomenologist Bachelard. He considers the ontological dimensions of this dialectic as an osmotic process of exchange a “becoming of being” (23), a condition necessary for transforming experience. To Bachelard’s way of thinking, “[w]e do not change place, we change our nature” (216). The potentiality of this maxim is realized through the words of Tanaka who says, “I do not dance in the place, I dance the place” (Stein and Tanaka 8). An exchange takes place between body and place and this alters the ontological experience of the body releasing the immanence of place. *Body Weather* teaches an open relationship with place involving empathetic dwelling, being open to the energies or presence of a particular environment. Cultivating sensitivity toward these energies through training sensory awareness enriches the process of relation, of being-in-place. As the participant experiences shifts in the modulation of perception moving from seeing to watching, from hearing to listening, this process amplifies and deepens the experience of being-in-place. The interior spaces of the body resound, inimical to Bachelard’s intermingling of being “in the out” and feeling “the out in” (qtd. in Casey, *Fate* 295).

⁶⁴ For a critique of the emptying of one’s embodied self in *Body Weather* training practice see Gretel Taylor.

In this embodied sense the practice redefines both self and place through a process that sets in motion place as coming into being.⁶⁵

Reflecting on key experiences of the Body Weather process during the 3-week laboratory it is Bachelard's poetical meditations of space that for me, lend a further discursive layer of resonance to the creative process of 'mapping' desert space. The poetic and human value of the desert in his topoanalysis is an incalculable geometry. Through an imaginative inversion of its vast dimensions the desert elicits a phenomenology of being-in-place which he considers as a "correspondence between the immensity of world space and the depth of 'inner space'" (Bachelard 202). According to Bachelard, the desert is a place that stirs the poetic imagination and is experienced at a "depth that is beyond measuring" (205). Yet he reveals a way of thinking of this particular place by entering into the experience of its image, an approach combining phenomenology and the poetic imagination, to produce "a fresh nuance in the presence of a spectacle" (Bachelard 39). He probes beneath the surface of the image, which can be read as a critique of cliqued cultural imaginings of the desert as an "immense horizon of sand", to invoke a different imagining, that of (Philippe Diole's image) "the immensity of a desert that has been experienced through inner intensity" (Bachelard 205). Bachelard reconfigures the imagining of the desert, "since immense is not an object", rather "[i]mmensity is within ourselves" (184). He gives further consideration to the work of Diole to re-imagine the depths of the desert by invoking a memory of what exists at a subconscious level which is the element of water.⁶⁶ This element is the absent presence filling the space of the imagination, and a potent reading of the desert inducing an act of re-membling. Phenomenological-investigations of place question the ontology, the being-ness of spatial experience, and this is a process combining experience, imagination, perception and memory. Bachelard's thinking of the desert revitalizes the significance of this place as "psychically innovating" to human life with a capacity for renewing "inner being" (198).

⁶⁵ This is a process without end, emphasized by de Quincey who says, "You never arrive." In Body Weather practice this mode of being expands the capabilities of sensory perception and this eventually leads to working with the manifestation of images in the body.

⁶⁶ Many of the Groundwork exercises were carried out in, at or near the dry creek bed situated in close proximity to the homestead.



Fig. 6. Workshop participants engaged in a ‘Groundwork’ session at the dry river bed of the Todd River near Hamilton Downs Station

Engaging with the desert in ways that can potentially stimulate new experiences and perceptions is a compelling issue in Australia. The desert, according to Roslynn D. Haynes, “is distant and unknown to most Australians, yet has become a symbol of the country” and continues to be perceived as “a hypnotic presence in Australian culture” (N.p). This place is deeply embedded in the cultural subconscious of Australia, and invokes a strong sense of existing “before-us” (Haynes N.p.). While this particular quality of places with prehistory may be, for the poetic imagination, an experience of “psychological transcendence” (Bachelard 185), in Australia this is also problematic. Contemporary history bears the legacy of a colonial past, an imperialism with particularly damaging consequences for the land existing “before-us” (my emphasis). The complex history and meaning of the desert in colonial terms was considered by explorers as “a ‘hideous blank’ where named features should be: nothing, void” (Haynes 4). Foreign to European experience were traditional Aboriginal understandings of the country embracing a relationship with the land as “the source of life, creativity and renewal” (Haynes 4). To dwell in contemporary Australia is a critical question and in current discourse an unsettling one. In the words of J. Goodall, “[n]on-Indigenous Australians are dwellers in a terrain that will

remain in important respects impenetrable to them, because it is filled with ancestral presences that communicate only through traditional djang (dreaming)” (115). Rather than perpetuate a sense of in-authentic relationships with the land it is important, I believe, for non-Indigenous Australians to find ways of connecting to this place. My case study presents one particular approach towards poetically dwelling in Australian space where I have outlined the use of embodied, creative strategies that self-reflexively engage with cultural perception accompanied with a critical questioning of the kinds of epistemologies which can become authoritative and destructive. The role of embodied cultural practice is important in this endeavor as I have argued that it can bring about a cultural shift in ways of thinking about, experiencing and perceiving the Australian landscape.⁶⁷

Innovative practice, such as Body Weather, is a way towards engaging mindfully with the nature of perception. I experienced *Triple Alice 1* as an attempt to peel back the layers of cultural perception and misperception to generate a different understanding of the environment through an embodied experience. The experience of traveling to the ‘centre’ and the contingent nature of emplacement explored through the Body Weather process of working and living in extreme conditions for 3 weeks had a profound affect on many of the participants. Performance theorist Gay McAuley notes that the experience for her was similar to what Bachelard considers a resounding of one’s inner being (*Reflections* 9). For Sarah Dunn, who writes about the experience as a “rite of passage”, the process generated a change in her “topography of self” with the “unexpected effect” of the re-emergence of memories from her past. Although, it is not made clear whether this was a process that occurred during the workshop or after, Dunn points out a series of significant and “unexpected” aspects about the experience. She writes that “[t]he memories came from both my waking and dream states” and that “[e]very one of them... was crystal clear, ‘refined’ in detail.” Furthermore, “[t]he memories were ‘ordinary’ ... ‘forgettable’ moments” and “I had no conscious control over what I remembered or recalled. Something else ‘within’ me was operating this reshuffling of memories, an

⁶⁷ For most of the inhabitants of Australia, dwelling takes place primarily in the densely populated regions along the coastal fringes of the country extending into suburban areas. From an ecological perspective, the ways in which we dwell and where we dwell in Australia is a compelling concern. According to Neurobiologist William L. Fox, the desert may be closer than we think, predicting that by 2050 there will be approximately 50 percent of the world’s population living in arid areas around the globe.

area that was autonomous”, leading to the proposition that “this reawakened area” could perhaps be “one’s subconscious” (44). Although my experience partially overlaps with both perspectives, I have come to consider those 3 weeks of working and living in the desert as a kind of cultural journey activating what Walter Benjamin terms an “awakening” (*Arcades* xii). For me the awakening of my own subconscious and the re-emergence of memory was not an “ordinary” experience as it seemed to be for Dunn.

What I experienced after returning home to Perth was a shift in my own ‘north’, through a memory visitation of the place I grew up in. Although it is impossible to explicate all the nuances and textures of this memory it was an experience that was extremely unsettling, bordering on the uncanny. The memory materialized while awake and in a dream state and, like Dunn’s, was one over which “I had no conscious control” (44). I was guided on an intimate topoanalysis of the house of my childhood, experiencing in close proximity inch-by-inch the nooks and crannies of this particular place. This process was for me an enactment of what landscape writer John Stilgoe (in his introduction to the work of Bachelard) terms, “fingertip memory” (vii). However the tracery being explored was rendered strange as I relived the experience as if I was hovering in a disembodied state, a floating being re-connecting to a place that in actuality no longer exists. This was deeply unnerving and emotional but it also became a way of inhabiting a place that had become lost to me (a place I had unconsciously forgotten) and through this act memory began to flow so that it was not only the house I perceived in sensuous detail, but also the surrounding environs as well as the landscape of the town. This is a place that inhabits me as part of my inner landscape.

I am reminded at this point of Stoller’s ethnographic research and practice that acknowledges the importance of engaging with physical and sensorial experiences as a way of doing (and writing) ethnography. In coming to understand the experiences of others through an embodied and reflexive process of learning and experiencing, he foregrounds the link between body and memory. He cites the writing of Toni Morrison to evoke the sensuous dimensions of cultural memory and place through embodied practice:

You know, they straightened out the Mississippi River in places, to make room for houses and livable acreage. Occasionally the river floods these places. “Floods” is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be. All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back where it was...It is emotional memory — where the nerves and the skin remember how it appeared. And a rush of imagination is our “flooding.” (*Sensous* 60)

According to de Quincey “places enter and inhabit people...” (Grant and de Quincey 120). This leads me to ask, for those of us who participated in *Triple Alice*, how does the desert inhabit us? In writing about *Triple Alice 1*, McAuley comments that for the workshop participants the process constituted a “body of experience” (*Introduction* viii). Returning ‘home’ to Perth, I carried deep inside and outside a sense of desert space. After three intense weeks of working and living in the desert, my embodied self felt radically altered and at odds with the existing sub/urban environment. On a cognitive level it was difficult to fathom the implications of the work as well as find an intellectual framework for making sense of the experience. It was the activation of memory that I believe to be the most profound effect of the Body Weather process. For me, the unraveling of self, was most potent upon return.

It would be pointless to try to explain the reasons for this in any scientific way. Instead I would argue that Body Weather radically alters the lived dimensions of embodied being and this has the capacity to stir up the sedimented layers of culture, memory and personal history. This is the efficacy of bodily practices, such as Body Weather as its mode of ontological interrogation acts as a kind of cultural barometer, a conductor of sedimented layers of history inscribed in the body, transforming inscription into energies and potentially, potent remembering (Stoller, *Sensous* 59). Dunn, points out that the lack of “re-incorporation” of participants being “brought back” (45) down to earth and “back out” into their own lives” (46) was perhaps a strong contributing factor for the lack of closure and failure of the experience to be conceived in a purely “rites of passage” framework (45). The open-ended nature of the laboratory meant that “it was up to the individuals to call upon their own resources to find their personal closure” (Dunn 46). I believe that an open-ended framework also activated a psychic process with the capability to be “psychically

innovating” as Bachelard articulates (72) but also potentially debilitating as Dunn points out that the effects of the work can leave the participant in a fragile state of mind.



Fig. 7. ‘Ground work’ training session of Triple Alice 1; workshop participant (Larissa Pryce) exploring the environs of Hamilton Downs

Bachelard considers that “[t]he house, even more than the landscape, is a “psychic state,” as “it bespeaks intimacy” (72). And I wonder if this is perhaps true or rather, that they exist in an uneasy tension. As non-indigenous Australians we are aware as Carter articulates, of “the fragility of our claim” on this land (*Lie* 2). And yet, for the most part, our earliest memories are of the places where we grow up. Living in Australia, and more specifically, on the coastal rim amidst redevelopment that is constantly changing the landscape and the way we see, know and interact with it, it is important to consider the implications of this kind of work. What am I to do with “a strong relation” to the desert? What happens to the experience when we (as creative practitioners, theorists, and writers) return to the places we came from? Do our perceptions of Australia as a place change? In response, it is my own enculturated landscape, the one that lives inside me in memory and imagination, that has become critically invoked as part of de Quincey’s interrogation into the “central heartland of Australia” (*Triple*). And it is also a strategy towards considering where the meaning or value of this work, of Triple Alice, perhaps might lie and, what I can possibly do

with such an experience in the context of creative work. I was raised in the heartlands of the Central Midlands (north-west of Perth) and I realize that I am yet to find a way to reconcile with this place which inhabits me. In this place, I learnt very little of the Indigenous history of this land and yet I was (unconsciously) schooled in an awareness of spatial boundaries and geographical landmarks segregating Indigenous people from non-Indigenous people in the town. How do I come to terms with the ambiguity of Aboriginal dispossession in a place where I grew up, a place which lives inside me? It is these kinds of questions that I believe propose a kind of (unwritten) map with embodied co-ordinates for the future of my research and practice and which I begin to address in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Walking: Revelatory Acts of Place-making

It is a truism encountered in a range of disciplines that ‘progress’ is changing the topography of the place-world at an accelerated rate. Changing places that people cherish or strongly identify with can invoke a range of different responses, from the immediacy of momentary shock to a recurrent sense of longing.⁶⁸ Transforming the places people inhabit can trigger emotive, sensory and visceral responses revealing the subjective and embodied nature of people’s relationships with place. In recent scholarship, critical attention has turned towards the experience of place loss, with the loss of place connected to a loss of self.⁶⁹ This is a theme I will return to later in the chapter.

The interwoven nature of self-identity in relation to place informs the creation of place identities at local, regional, national and international scales (*Senses* 10). Implicit in this idea is a sense of belonging to place which is considered to be fundamental to identity. “People’s sense of both personal and cultural identity is intimately bound up with place identity”, as Buttimer affirms, to the extent that “loss of home or ‘losing one’s place’ may often trigger an identity crisis” (*Home* 167). The personal experience of place loss (for example through migration, whether intentional, accidental or by force) is a powerful source of affect and meaning that marks the relationship between person and place in particular ways.⁷⁰ In losing a sense of place it can feel as if what is being lost are the lived dimensions (both temporal and spatial) of place/s one knows intimately (Buttimer, *Home* 167).

Inhabiting places through embodied modes of dwelling and moving invokes emotions and feelings, bodily sensations and visceral responses that shape peoples relationships to place/s. This accrues as a lived experience of place that constitutes a way of coming to know our place within the everyday places and spaces where our lives unfold. It is a process that flows between bodies and spaces conditioning embodied perception and subjectivity in ways that substantiate modes of being, becoming and belonging in relation to place.

⁶⁸ This is a burgeoning field of enquiry and there are numerous examples which illustrate a range of responses. See Backhaus and Murungi; Tuan, *Place, art*.

⁶⁹ See, for example Read; and Buttimer and Seamon. Anguish over the engulfing spread of homogenisation is also palpable in Pierson.

⁷⁰ It is not my intention to explain the impact of loss in relation to place in any definitive sense.

However, the intimate knowledge of places we all have, are different from person to person and from place to place. Personal connections people have with places where they live are not only linked to senses of time and space but also intersect with contemporary processes shaped by social, cultural and political forces that affect the ways in which these connections are made. It is important to think about how we come to know our place and therefore consider the interaction of “outside” (geopolitical) forces in contributing towards shaping (or erasing) the lived “inner” dimensions of people’s connections to place. For if we are to truly know the places where we live, it is vital to acknowledge the broader geophysical, sociocultural dimensions in relation to understanding a lived perspective of place/s.

Experiences of place loss have given rise to concepts of placelessness through notions such as estrangement, dislocation and displacement.⁷¹ Our rapidly globalising world is intricately connected to this critical nexus creating a shift in our relations to, and ways of thinking about, place. According to performer Leslie Hill, processes associated with homogenisation have led to a sense of “placelessness” (3).⁷² This is a term Hill uses to describe a phenomenon that she considers to be particularly pervasive in America, and which encapsulates a sense of the absence that exists at the heart of people’s relationships with place. The affect of placelessness is considered by Hill as engendering negative consequences and actions as “most Americans have been living semi-placeless lives for three generations”, so much so that “the disconnection to place isn’t even apparent to us anymore” (5). To emphasize this point Hill adds, somewhat eerily, “[n]ow we are busy making the rest of the world into a scary place(-lessness)” (5).

This de-familiarised sense of place fractures notions of place and place identities which, according to Gary Backhaus and John Murungi, are “imbued with personal, social, and cultural meanings”, ways of experiencing place that “provide a significant framework in which identity is constructed, maintained, and transformed” (8). To their way of thinking “we are implicated in the landscape”, meaning that we are also implicated in processes of transformation, modification and change to the cultural

⁷¹ For discussions of placelessness see Relph, *Place*; and Kwon.

⁷² Hill also refers to the work of James Howard Kunstler to acknowledge the role of the car in the demise of community life and the destruction of the landscape.

landscapes we inhabit (Backhaus and Murungi 8).⁷³ Transformation is a dialectical process, the effect being that it “informs consciousness and the lived-body, and thus transforms the parameters of human identities” (Backhaus and Murungi 11). However, in rapidly transforming the cultural landscapes where we live there is a danger that when taken too far “we allow objectivated currents, which have taken on a “life” of their own, decide our identity for us” (Backhaus and Murungi 11). This leads Backhaus and Murungi to ask, “[d]o we want to be these landscapes that we are?” (11). In light of these observations concerning placelessness and its implications, this foregrounds an urgent need for practical steps toward redress.

Placelessness and the affects it engenders are compelling issues relevant to the themes and exigencies of my thesis. If “placelessness” is (becoming more and more) insinuated in our everyday lives, in the places and landscapes we inhabit, and the ways in which we inhabit them, then it is important to examine how people live and experience places in order to understand the gap that exists between ourselves and landscape.

Ideally, this suggests to me a re-examination of the practices that bring about a sense of implacement, in everyday life and which play a part in *shaping* identities. In this chapter I examine the practice of walking to consider how the experience of being on foot can inform perspectives for knowing place/s and by extension ourselves. In thinking through the implications of ‘identity crisis’ (referred to above), I discuss examples of performance that explore walking as a means of engaging with the relationship between self and place and how this can critically address some of the effects of displacement and loss. My analyses will show how performance uses walking as a strategic mode for inhabiting lived space and time to re-examine experiences of implacement within the Australian context.

Before beginning these analyses I make some brief incursions into walking practice to contextualise some of the crucial elements that will assist the reader’s understanding of the terrain I engage with in this chapter. The practice of walking

⁷³ Along with this imbrication, there are social, political and ethical aspects that need to be considered in apprehending and interpreting the affects of the co-implication of human identity and geographical contexts.

contributes towards the framework of place-making that I develop in this thesis as it is an embodied mode of inhabiting place. To aid its development, I discuss the collaboration between body, mind and place in walking practice to highlight the workings of this interrelationship and how it is used in performance (and the examples that follow) as a strategic approach for charting new pathways in relation to issues underpinning place(-lessness).

A Study of Walking

Walking practice emerged in the 1960s deployed by artists as a medium for exploring landscape, space, place, temporality, and the realm of lived experience. As a subject and strategy walking became a way of responding to contemporary modes of being and living in Western society. In Rebecca Solnit's historical account of walking, she writes that its re-emergence in contemporary times can be read as "an act of resistance" employed by "countercultures and subcultures" in reaction to "the postindustrial, postmodern loss of space, time, and embodiment" (*Wanderlust* 267).⁷⁴ The subversive dimensions of spatial practices, developed further in the work of historian Michel de Certeau, suggests walking as a tactical act of spatial appropriation, its ubiquity entwined with a capacity for transformation – "[w]alking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it 'speaks'" (99). As a mode of operation, walking is a way of using and transforming space, an act akin to a form of enunciation. Walking "[l]ike figurative language ... stray[s] from proper places, introducing new significations, ambiguities, and voices into an existing spatial system" (*walkinginplace* 2). There is a "long legacy of avant-garde wandering, from that paradigmatically modern figure, the 19th-century flâneur, to the aleatory drifting of the Surrealists and Situationists" (*walkinginplace* 2). The influence of these earlier peripatetic politics can be traced through to recent examples of performance and live art exploring live(d) spatial experience (I engage with this further in Chapter 4). A range of mobile practices are utilised by practitioners in contemporary investigations of space which act as a strategic framework for

⁷⁴ Joseph A. Amato provides a comprehensive historical study of walking tracing its origins from the time of the ancient Greeks to the present.

negotiating personal and political issues in relation to the cultural landscape.⁷⁵ The common ground that walking affords both intellectually and as a means of creative production foregrounds place as a subject of inquiry and a field of action opening fresh perspectives for research and practice.⁷⁶ Walking prompts a critical rethinking of the ways in which place matters in our everyday lives. While there is a new generation of walking practitioners who have inherited the concerns and questions of the past, their work forms part of a larger contemporary critique that contributes towards new ways of engaging with the place-world as it is today.

In the process of walking through places our minds and bodies become activated. Thinking, experiencing, remembering and imagining are put in motion connecting the walker to places and enriching the subjective dimensions of identity. These activated sensory-perceptual modalities can be used, I believe, to generate critical and creative material for performance making. Walking creates the warp and weft of a process in which places entwine with (and potentially unravel) the self. Walking is a way of inhabiting place, in the sense defined by David Macauley, of “locat[ing] the body in place. In the repetitious act of turning over our legs” we are rhythmically “stitching ourselves into the local fabric of the environs, grounding and rooting ourselves *even if momentarily*” (my emphasis) (196). Walking involves negotiating the polarities between being rooted in place and being in motion and yet it is also the thread which connects stasis and mobility together. Walking suspends any settled relationship between these bipolar pulls of stability and motion but the tension this generates creates a unique spatial experience for the walker sensitive to the rhythmical nature of ebb and flow that walking produces and the kinds of thinking this generates.

Walking is a mode of inhabiting place that slides along a continuum of “being and doing” (Solnit, *Wanderlust* 5). Along this sliding scale are ruptures that come from recognition of places as well as a shifting process of fluid states, ephemera and

⁷⁵ See for example the work of Pearson, Wrights & Sites, and Deirdre Heddon. Pearson and Shanks identify “the flâneur”, “the nomad” and “the Rambler” as modes of embodied and subjective activity in walking and experiencing the city/urban space (*Archaeology* 149).

⁷⁶ The contribution of walking to a range of disciplines within the humanities and social sciences has opened up new lines of enquiry. An interdisciplinary focus has reinvigorated discussions of embodiment and place in ways that foreground the critical importance of human action and dwelling. Some of these perspectives are addressed by Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst.

moments of stillness. On foot the walker occupies a transitional space moving through, in and over places, experiencing consciously and unconsciously the vicissitudes of a circumambient and place-bound action. In the process of walking one place is exchanged for another. I like to think of this ex-change as a dialectical process with stability and change working in tandem. Walking generates perceptual activity, thoughts and ruminations in relation to the places that constitute local surroundings. The generative nature of walking never settles, but rather enfolds and activates potentially enriching the experience of being on foot while moving through place/s. It is in this way that the experiential dimensions of places become threaded through the embodied subject. Solnit remarks that, “[m]oving on foot seems to make it easier to move in time; the mind wanders from plans to recollections to observations” (*Wanderlust* 5). Space, time and place are mobilised in the process of walking stimulating the production of a sense of lived place, informed by a bodily labour enriched by sensory perception, thinking, remembering and experience.

In contradistinction to contemporary forms of mobility, with the emphasis on speed, arrival and the collapsing of space and time, walking is a form of movement that realigns the body with the walker as the body is in motion actively moving through space rather than being conveyed by a form of transportation. Walking is a mode of movement that unravels at a slower pace to other forms of mobility, with the walking body rhythmically rising and falling with each step. Macauley writes that, “[w]ith walking, the practice is itself the path, which always takes place in a place. When this link is lost, it is often because pace overtakes and supplants place” (197). In this respect walking can be regarded as the embodying of linkages to and with place. While contemporary modes of transportation, such as trains, planes and automobiles, tend to obliterate, or rather, blur place and space walking practice entwines pace and place enabling our “surroundings [to become] actively synthesized in and through our bodies” (Macauley 196). I believe the practice of walking does not bring about a total synthesis however, more a movement of oscillation that aims to strike a balance drawing mind, body and place/s into a conversation with each other. For Solnit, the ideal state in walking is the mind, the body, and the world aligning, becoming conversant, “three notes suddenly making a chord” (*Wanderlust* 5). In practicing walking it is therefore important to tune in to the thoughts, embodied experiences and the affective dimensions of place that pull at perception. These are the generative

seeds that I believe can produce creative humus for the practitioner providing the cues and clues for a poiesis of place-making; a process of making sense and meaning of place/s in performance (I discuss this further in Chapter 5).

In everyday life, in the habitual contexts and processes conditioning people's movements in and through places, walking is largely an unconscious process and more often than not a contemporary mode considered expedient in getting from place to place. As such the habitual nature of walking frequently escapes attention and along with this slippage places, and the spaces between places, potentially become overlooked as well. It is my belief, however, that engaging with walking as a critical and creative practice can facilitate a re-thinking of the spaces and places we pass through and the multiple ways in which we are invested in them. Walking stimulates a conscious awareness of the places we inhabit and this can be used to further inquiry into specific issues encompassing people's relationships with place/s.



Fig. 8. Midland Railway Workshop, Midland 2003

Performance analyses

In this section of the chapter I examine how walking practice is used as a strategic response in performance to mobilise issues concerning identity, belonging and place. To further my analysis of walking I discuss two contemporary works which featured as part of the NRLA 2003.⁷⁷ These are, *Void: Kellerberrin Walking* by Mark Minchinton and *Breathing for Biagio Walking (A Walk from Perth to Kellerberrin)* by Domenico de Clario.⁷⁸ Dispossession and dislocation are part of the academic-performers' lived experience, and are brought to the foreground in these works

⁷⁷ One of the key themes explored as part of the programme for The National Review of Live Art Midland, 2003, was the age-old art of walking, investigated by several artists for whom a peripatetic mode of inquiry (is a vital component) underpins and enlivens their creative practice. These artists included Perdita Phillips, Domenico de Clario, Canadian duo Lone Twin, Gregory Pryor. International and local artists redefined the possibilities for imagining this thematic in ways which invoked the idea of "[w]alking as an action, walking as a journey, walking as a process of discovery" to enable the mobilisation of localised cultural space[s] as a framework for specific investigations into the interrelated phenomena of mobility and displacement (Flindell). Various trajectories and sites were explored including the surrounding environs of the Midland Railway Workshops, Perth, as well as routes between Busselton and Kellerberrin in regional Western Australia.

⁷⁸ Hereafter I will refer to the shortened titles of the performances as *Kellerberrin Walking* and *Breathing for Biagio*.

through the use of walking and writing as tools for investigation and reflection of these issues. In both walks the performers transpose their experiences of journeying through the landscape into written accounts (forms of documentation) as they embody, remember and re-imagine places to provoke the consciousness of the reader-audience. What makes the performances useful for my argument is the way the performers use walking to engage with the places they inhabit and use the experience to re-imagine relationships to the cultural landscape as an ongoing process involving time, memory, place, self and embodiment. The sense of contingency underpinning both walks functions to maintain a dialectical tension between mobility and stasis, estrangement and familiarity, exploring and settling. In both examples walking is invested in cultural critique (of the Australian context) and the recovery of history and memory as a redemptive function of performance. Walking is enacted as performance to stimulate and transform the perceptions of both the performer and the audience in ways that call for a re-writing (and re-reading) of experiences of place/s. In my analyses I focus on how walking can be used to call attention to the experience of coming to know particular places and the possibilities this opens up for rethinking the relationship between identity and place.

My analysis consists of three main sections informed by the performers' walking and writing as well as the visceral imagination of a topographical landscape that is familiar to me.⁷⁹ First I begin with a brief synopsis of both performances explaining the nature of the performers' perambulations to help establish the significance of self and cultural identity in relation to place. This is followed by detailed analyses of both performances as I address some of the issues underpinning cultural identity in relation to the politics of place and how walking is used to challenge and interrogate particular lived experiences of a localised Australian space. I combine theoretical perspectives with practical detail to provide the reader with a nuanced understanding of how walking is used by the performers to evoke experiences of landscape as a way of exploring (as well as negotiating and resisting) particular meanings and relationships between self and place. I conclude with a consideration of walking as a way of reclaiming and recovering a relationship with place in light of these issues.

⁷⁹ The artists' walks intersect with my own journeys, lived experiences, memories and imaginings as the places they walk through and encounter in their performances invoke my own lived topography. I discuss this further, albeit briefly in the closing sections of my analysis of de Clario's walk but I also raise the issue again in Chapter 5.

Pre-ambulations

In 2003, Minchinton and De Clario walked to Kellerberrin, a town situated on the Great Eastern Highway 204 kilometres east of Perth in the Central East wheat belt region of Western Australia. Although Kellerberrin is considered by many people to be small in scale and by implication, of little importance, the performers revoke this attitude of cultural homogeneity.⁸⁰ Kellerberrin holds personal significance for both of the performers, imbricated in the complex interrelationship defined by Malpas as encompassing “person, place and past” (175-193). Walking is performed as a mnemonic act to acknowledge the interrelationships between personal, familial histories and the journeys the performers associate with this place encompassing lived experiences of loss, (be)longing and identity. In the process of walking to Kellerberrin the performers personal connections to this particular locality are linked with politics and issues concerning the wider cultural landscape of Australia. Their walks produce fertile terrain in the form of written accounts that provide a trace of their thoughts, experiences and recollections linking genealogy and history, place and memory.

Kellerberrin is a place where Minchinton’s family origins are derived. His great-grandfather was a Nyoongah man who was born around 1868 at Cattle Chosen on Alfred Bussell’s estate.⁸¹ In 1891 his great-grandfather “married a white woman ... – not unheard of, but unusual then” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 2). They had children, including Minchinton’s Grandmother who was born in Busselton in 1901. In the process of tracing his genealogy, Minchinton learnt of some painful family history: “Before she left Busselton and met my grandfather, my grandmother either had a relationship with, or was raped by, another man” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 3). This resulted in an ‘illegitimate’ daughter born in Perth in 1923 who was raised by Minchinton’s “great-grandfather and great-grandmother, and, later, by her aunts and

⁸⁰ There is a cultural stereotype that all small towns are the same.

⁸¹ The Nyoongah are an indigenous Australian people who live in the south-west corner of Western Australia, from Geraldton on the west-coast to Esperance on the south-coast. Prior to the arrival of Europeans they inhabited regional areas of the south-west from Jurien Bay to the southern-coast of Western Australia and east to what is now known as Ravensthorpe and Southern Cross. Alfred Bussell (21 June 1816 – 18 October 1882) was an early settler in Western Australia. Rosemary van den Berg offers some insightful perspectives about the Nyoongar people of the south-west of Western Australia, acknowledging in particular the impact of racism on their lives and culture as well as the effect of multi-cultural policies in Australia.

uncles” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 3). His grandmother moved to Wyalkatchem where his mother was born in 1927. Subsequently, his grandmother moved to Kellerberrin where she raised a large family of nine children, including his mother who left the town when she was nineteen years old. It is Minchinton’s belief that “[s]omewhere between Busselton and Kellerberrin, or perhaps before then, my grandmother ‘lost’, disavowed, or ‘forgot’ her indigenous identity” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 2).

The significance of Kellerberrin for de Clario is also underpinned with loss and grief. During a visit to Kellerberrin in 2001, he was informed of a death in the town, that of friend and artist Gregory Pryor’s infant son Noah. Twelve hours prior he had also learnt of the unexpected death of close friend and sculptor, Neil Roberts. In a bid to make a contribution, he bought the Kellerberrin cinema and dedicated it to Noah and the people of Kellerberrin (Minchinton and De Clario 46). De Clario renamed the cinema Aurora after the cinema located opposite the house where he was raised in Trieste. He had emigrated to Australia with his family when he was a young boy, arriving in Fremantle in 1956. The experience of the boat passage to a new country haunts his memory in the form of a person, a man called Biagio who he remembers was desperately unhappy throughout the journey. Biagio “had left the ship in Fremantle ... sick of seeing un-ending water” and “just started walking inland towards god knows what ... looking for home” (de Clario, *this*). De Clario later learnt that Biagio “had managed to reach Kalgoorlie where” on arrival he “died it was rumoured of heartbreak and desperation” (de Clario, *this*). It is de Clario’s belief that Biagio walked along the Great Eastern Highway passing through towns such as Northam, Cunderdin, Tammin and Kellerberrin.

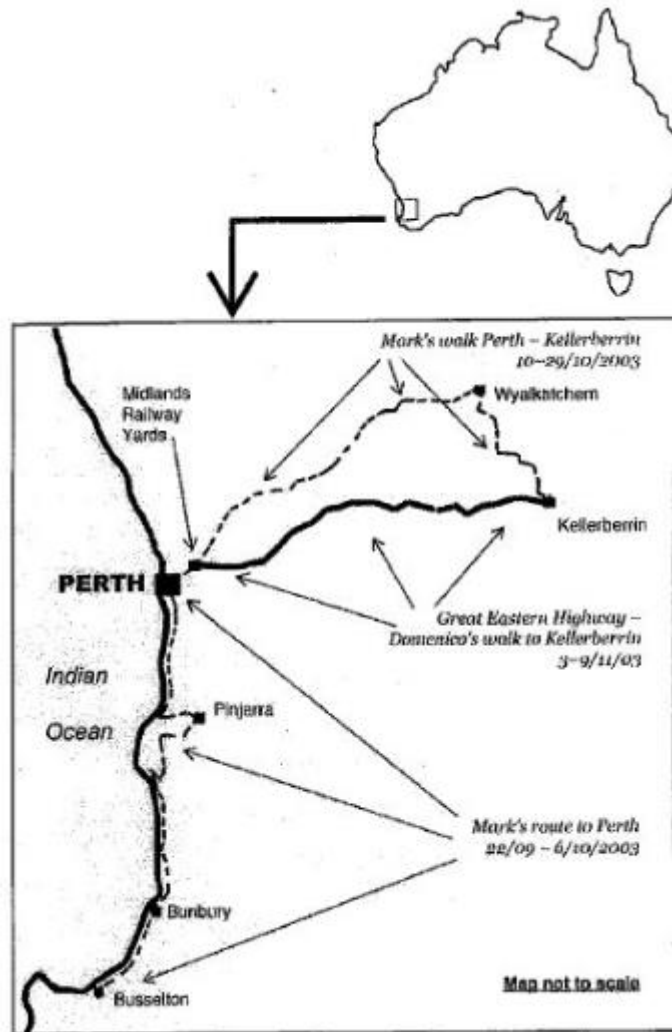


Fig. 9. Domenico and Mark's Walks, 2003

The fragments of personal/autobiographical writing I have included above reveal threads of histories, connections between home and elsewhere and the sense of loss that potentially mediates relocation from one place to another. The performances use walking and writing to address the issue of displacement by peeling back the layers of personal history to give voice to personal as well as social and historical experiences of being in place and out of place in relation to the Australian context. Walking and writing operate as critical methodologies, functioning as ways of re-reading and re-writing experiences of place and space. Used together they act as modes of response that give shape to dynamic ways of perceiving and remembering place.

The significance of Kellerberrin for both of the performers entwined in 2002 during a phone conversation when de Clario told Minchinton that he had bought the Kellerberrin cinema. According to Minchinton, “[m]y mother and father probably met and certainly danced in this cinema when it was used as a hall” (Minchinton and de Clario 49). It was the sense of a shared connection with Kellerberrin in terms of converging histories, that became the catalysing ingredient for both performers to undertake a performance together in Kellerberrin (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 4).⁸² However, rather than discuss the performance that took place *in* Kellerberrin I want to focus on the processes engaged with by both performers in walking *to* Kellerberrin.⁸³ It is the journey undertaken on foot by the performers that is important to the key themes of my thesis in this chapter; to extend the concept of inhabitation by examining how walking practice can offer a framework for illuminating connections people make with place/s.

As I have outlined above, the performers explorations of personal history reveal connections with particular persons who travelled through this landscape and the implications of loss that ensued. Their expositions illuminate experiences markedly different from their own in ways that acknowledge the unremembered while also conceding to the impossibility of ever knowing the full/true story underpinning journeys that criss-cross this land. Both performers are skilled in the practice of writing as they interweave experiences, recollections and observations that resound with political contextualization and the effects of the postcolonial. However, both walks reflect different perspectives and experiences in relation to the issue of belonging in this country. Walking and writing are used to generate and enable diverse readings and writings of place which then aid the development of new understandings of experiences of being in place.

Minchinton began his walk in Busselton, a town located 200 kilometres south of Perth, on 22 September 2003. His walk took place “along roads and beaches, through National Parks and forests” with “detours and digressions” along the way (Minchinton and de Clario 47). He carried a back pack of food, water and camping

⁸² The issue of ‘sharing histories’ is discussed in relation to the Australian Reconciliation process by Heather Goodall.

⁸³ For further information about the performance at Kellerberrin refer to Minchinton and de Clario 64.

equipment, and for the most part, slept outside in a hammock not far from the road but sometimes also stayed at a hotel or caravan park. Throughout the day he wrote journal entries on a PalmPilot as a reflection of his “thoughts, emotions, affects” and took photographs including Global Positioning System (GPS) readings (Minchinton and de Clario 47). He emailed the journal entries via a mobile phone ‘posting’ back to the Midland Railway Workshops in Perth as part of the National Review of Live Art (NRLA) to enable the reader/viewer to follow the route taken and his experience of the places travelled through. Throughout the journey some days were spent resting and recovering. He stayed for approximately one week in Perth before heading to Wyalkatchem. A friend walked with him on the last three days of the performance, but it was essentially a walk undertaken alone. He “began in rain and gale force winds” walking approximately 650 kilometres and finished his journey in Kellerberrin “in sunshine and high clouds” seven weeks later on 29 October (Minchinton and de Clario 47). *Kellerberrin Walking* was performed live and simultaneously existed on the web and as an installation of writing and photographic images for the National Review of Live Art (NRLA), Midland in 2003.

De Clario’s walk commenced in Perth on 3 November 2003. The trajectory he chose for walking to Kellerberrin was “by the most direct route – along the Great Eastern Highway – from about 9am to 2pm, travelling c.30 km each day” (Minchinton and de Clario 47). He would wake at around 5am and drive to where he had ended his walk the previous day and continue to walk heading for Kellerberrin. On his walk he carried a small suitcase containing grass native to the Guildford area and a woollen blindfold.⁸⁴ He was picked up and driven back to Perth at 2pm each day where he worked at Edith Cowan University. His walk “began and ended in sunshine” and “on the final day in Kellerberrin it was around 40deg Celsius” (Minchinton and de Clario 47). He was joined by Minchinton on his first and last day of walking. The walk took seven days and on the last day both Minchinton and de Clario were joined by Gregory Pryor as they walked into Kellerberrin on 9 November. At around sunset, the three of them made a 30 minute “installation-performance for the Kellerberrin community” and spoke about their “reasons for coming to Kellerberrin” (Minchinton and de Clario 47). *Breathing for Biagio* was a live performance for the NRLA, and

⁸⁴ The suitcase was carried inside a backpack which he carried on his back during the walk, (personal email conversation), June 2006.

preceded another walk, *Terminal (Breathing for Biagio Walking)*, which took place as part of the South Project at the Sydney Myer Asia Centre, University of Melbourne 2004. De Clario's walks for Biagio also involved writing and photographic images, but were primarily live performances.

In *Kellerberrin Walking* and *Breathing for Biagio*, walking is deployed in creative and critical ways by the performers to raise an awareness of the significance of particular relationships to this country⁸⁵ with the performers walking through, in and across a land embedded with personal history and memory.⁸⁶ The performances re-imagine and represent the particularities of their journeys using walking and writing to explore this process. In both walks journeying is an embodied, temporal and narrative process enabling the performers to experience the landscape in which their individual and collective histories and memories are dis/re-located (problematically situated). The localised space through which they travel plays a pivotal role in cultivating their responses. The surroundings elicit a plethora of provocative thoughts, actions and queries as the performers "narratives" weave places, and events from the past and present into a fluid way of perceiving the landscape. In the process of walking threads of history and memory unravel bringing past and present, remembering and perceiving, into a relationship of contiguity. The performers' action of walking channels their experiences of loss (loss of self, place/s and persons) creating a passage between past and present that alters time and space in ways that produce a complex experience of travelling through a topography which both of them render as familiar and strange. In journeying they inhabit an in-between space in which place/s, selves, persons and aspects of the past are recalled, reclaimed and reconsidered. Their associations (dis/connections they make) with the landscape they travel through bring a depth of content and context to the places that form part of the local fabric of this particular region of Australia, with walking, in turn, giving shape to their stories, activating additional nuances and meanings. Walking opens up a

⁸⁵ The notion of country is a particularly Australian term associated with the rich cultural-historical connections to land held by Australian Indigenous populations and encompassing the symbolic function of social and cultural identities that contribute toward understanding the imbrication of self-identity in relation to place/s, throughout this land.

⁸⁶ Although I am aware of the post-colonial reading that may be used as a framework for understanding the histories underpinning these performances, I do not propose to explore a framework for conceptualising migrant or indigenous identities, rather I want to focus on the ways in which histories can be invoked through walking using this cultural practice to invoke the historical fabric embedded in this country to both resist and explore meanings of being in place/s.

space for rethinking the ways in which our local surroundings figure in memory and imagination. The performers negotiate the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of a cultural landscape embedded with personal and political histories while also using the experience of walking to open up alternative ways of identifying with place/s.

T-reading the personal and the political on foot⁸⁷

In *Kellerberrin Walking* Minchinton describes the walk as a journey toward trying to understand and re-connect with the indigenous history hidden, ‘dispossessed’ within him.⁸⁸ He writes that “this journey begins with my awakening to my Indigenous identity. This awakening has taken more than 40 years” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 2). *Kellerberrin Walking* is a performance of his awakening. “I walk from the place now known as Busselton – where my grandmother was known as black – to Kellerberrin – where my grandmother was known as white” (Gallasch 4). In the preamble to his journal entries, and what can be read as the underlying subtext/motivation for the walk to Kellerberrin, he writes of the effects of (attempted) erasure of cultural identity as an inheritance not only carried by him alone, but also by the generations before him.⁸⁹

My story, my paranoia, defensiveness, grandiosity, and shame, are not mine alone. The suppression, repression, of my mother’s family’s indigenous history is the story of Australia. Before I, and this country, can overcome those feelings, we must speak and own them, as we must speak and own the stories that produced them. I know my story is only a

⁸⁷ Paul Carter talks about the peripatetic in terms of walking and reading. At a seminar titled “Myths of Place: A Migrant’s Perspective”, held at the University of Western Australia in 2001 he spoke about reading as treading, t-reading as a way of conceptualising place as movement. I am using this neologism in a similar way although I am at times concerned with the heaviness that the term “treading” perpetuates. I also use the term t/h-reading to inflect the practice of walking with the notion of stitching ideas into, as well as picking at, the cultural fabric of the landscape.

⁸⁸ The metaphor of the journey is described by Birkeland as a framework for research that “creates conversations and communication” (18). I will develop this notion further in Chapter 5.

⁸⁹ Minchinton does not use the term “preamble” in his opening remarks, but I find it to be a useful term to characterise the exposition of his writing. In his introduction he reveals what has preceded this walk, explaining and describing personal history, experience, and feelings. This serves an important function I believe in preparing for his walk and sharing with the reader the ‘burden’ of history, his own and Australia’s. There is a strong sense that the weight of this history is something he carries and is willing to face and release (realise differently?) in the process of walking. I have come across other writers who use the term “preamble”, such as Peter Timms; and Macauley.

small one, that there are many, more tragic, stories to tell. But, for now, I can speak only my story, my awakening, keeping in mind that '[e]ven when we are speaking for ourselves, we always speak in the place of someone who will not be able to speak' (Gilles Deleuze & Claire Parnet). (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 3)

The "suppression, repression" he speaks of expresses the negative psychical effects of the Indigenous peoples dispossession, an historical fact that is part of the history of Australia. The emotional states Minchinton describes express a complex response indelibly linking the personal, family history, that of his Indigenous ancestry, as problematically dis/located within the Australian context. As his "confession" (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 3) vividly expresses, the negative effects of "transgenerational haunting" bequeathed to him manifested a profound sense of ambivalence within himself, which he speaks of as a void inside.⁹⁰ The walk he undertakes is an acknowledgment of the complex imbrication of personal and political terrain that constitutes his own (and others) estrangement and can be read as a way of responding to the 'void' he experiences within himself.⁹¹

The notion of the void is an ambiguous spatial signifier invoking a strong sense of cultural loss and (be)longing, a legacy which Minchinton believes manifested and intensified into "my emptiness, and my feeling that I did not belong on this earth, and certainly not in this country" (*Kellerberrin* 3). However, this sense of the void within extends beyond an individual account as it reflects historically the colonialist perception of Australia as an empty land, "doubly empty" according to Veronica Brady, as this "newly discovered" country was a space/place perceived in Western consciousness as "an empty container" ready to be filled and developed for settlement (92). The voiding of the land, encapsulated by the doctrine of *terra nullius*, is considered by Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs as a "colonial fantasy" with debilitating consequences for Aboriginal people. They write of "terra nullius" as "the view that Aboriginal people were 'not here', the view that they were an absence in Australia, not in terms of their person, but in terms of property rights" (16). This view perpetuated the attempted cultural erasure of the Indigenous people of Australia

⁹⁰ Transgenerational haunting is discussed by Adam Phillips and Alison Mark, 102.

⁹¹ See Casey, *Fate* 3-22 for an illuminating discussion of the notion of the void.

through forced removal and extinguishment disconnecting them from their families and their traditional relationships with the land. Aboriginal relationships with the land are described by Deborah Bird Rose in terms of “a kinship relationship ... there are obligations of nurturance. People and country take care of each other” (49). The significance of the land is central to understanding concepts of Aboriginality historically and today. Veronica Strang writes that, “[t]he land mediated every aspect of life: social organisation, kin obligations, political power, economic rights and spiritual beliefs. It therefore acted as a comprehensive repository for identity and personal memory” (110). *Terra nullius* was overturned through the Native Title Act of 1993 granting legal/political compensation to Aboriginal people. However, the impact of colonial policies and practices in attempting to “render absent indigenous presence in the land” is not forgotten (Tompkins 66). The violence and suffering experienced by Aboriginal peoples from the colonising culture continues to reverberate on many levels throughout the cultural landscape and seeps through in memory and personal history.

The unsettling cultural politics of dwelling in Australia emerges in Minchinton’s account in terms of being disconnected from a significant part of his own history through Indigenous suppression, the ambiguous responses to Aboriginal ancestry in his family and the impact of the absence of this heritage on his own lived (missing) experience.⁹² His personal history extends to also encompass the wider social, cultural, political and historical milieu of Australia. He writes, “I do believe I have been profoundly affected and, yes, damaged, by the suppression of my Aboriginal history – as Australia damages itself by suppressing its Aboriginal history” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 4). The far-reaching effects of this suppression echoes and reverberates as the “postcolonial anxiety” considered by cultural theorist David Crouch in his account of dwelling in Australia (44). Referencing the work of Paul Carter, Crouch writes that this anxiety stems from “the spaces our very subjectivities come to inhabit ... ‘grounded’ upon a land which is not ours but is instead the very kin and culture of an indigenous peoples” (Crouch 44). We ground ourselves by building in a bid to belong, but the places we build are attempts to “stabilise”, to

⁹² I am aware of the existential phenomenological notion of “lived experience”, however I also want to emphasize that this needs to be recognised as a living terrain, re-lived in the context of Minchinton’s walk as he brings to life in a contingent sense history through walking and telling. The lived, therefore, is also live(d) with past experience entwining and re-fabricating the present.

“arrest” the ground, to lay claim to this land (Carter, *Lie* 2). The desire for “a fixed or static sort of ‘rootedness’” has resulted in “our estrangement from the folds and movement of an uneven ground” (Carter, *Lie* 2). These political inflections inform Crouch’s/Carter’s poetical approach toward dwelling in/on this land. The anxiety underpinning spatial experience in Australia is explored by Crouch through considering some of the ways in which modes of dwelling and moving invoke a sense of “recovering a relationship with the landscape in our dwellings through the poetry of movement, or the movement of poetry” (Crouch 44-5).⁹³

Minchinton’s walk can be considered in a similar way with walking and writing combining to restore/re-story a relationship with the ground. His walk encompasses the “poetry of movement”, actualised through the rhythmical nature and pace of walking. Walking is a way of getting a measure of the land, not in a metrical sense by measuring the distance travelled but through allowing the experience to inscribe itself on his body and in this way actively incorporate a sense of place in and through his body.⁹⁴ The walk also encompasses the “movement of poetry” as he tells his story of moving over this land and how the land in turn moves him. The writing reflects this sense of movement mobilising “the dynamic rhythms and pacing of poetry” in a similar way defined by Carter “that metre or speech pattern releases language for movement” (*Lie* 5). Walking and writing converge to create a double movement that folds back and feeds forward into the performer’s journey in a way that is both generative and accumulative with the creative humus of his thoughts and actions reverberating beyond the paths he makes/takes.

⁹³ For further discussion about the interrelated nature of poetry and walking see Macauley.

⁹⁴ I am thinking here of Paul Connerton’s discussion of incorporating and inscribing practices, habitual bodily practices which through repetition cultivate ways of knowing and remembering “in the hands and in the body” (94-5). In bringing habitual embodied experience to conscious awareness this becomes a framework for understanding in which practice and interpretation are capable of engendering meaning. Connerton refers to walking as well as other bodily practices that are learnt, and continuously practiced until they become familiar. Cultivating an awareness of place through the body and with the feet, in walking, is a step towards rendering explicit a way of knowing, remembering and understanding place as an embodied activity (94-5).



Fig 10. Paterson Road, c.11km NNE of Pinjarra

Using his experience, the performer writes and re-writes his-story exploring and embodying the landscape as an intimate way of knowing and recording a journey through places in the landscape. Walking and writing shape, and are shaped by, the performer's self-reflexivity, dual processes he shares with the audience/reader, situated elsewhere.⁹⁵ The performer's writing travels across space in email postings to people located in other places.⁹⁶ This is not a linear process, however, as each day of the journey reflects changes in space and time as he unravels the experience of walking for the audience/reader who t-reads his reflections on the shifting nature of the experience of being-at-home. The performer's experience of dwelling and travelling reveal various permutations of rootedness, restlessness and routedness⁹⁷, in a similar way to de Certeau's multiple modalities of walking "changing from step to step, stepping in through proportions, sequences, and intensities which vary

⁹⁵ Macauley characterises the repletion of ambulation and poetry in terms of "the walk-poem or the poem-walk ... as a thick description or phenomenological embodiment of the landscape and topography" (218).

⁹⁶ This includes the Midland Railway workshop.

⁹⁷ The performer considers himself in terms of being a "grey nomad" and a "paid vagabond". These modes of peripatetic activity acknowledge the personal, subjective dimensions of travelling. They carry different inflections that acknowledge age, economic privilege as well as the ability to travel.

according to the time, the path taken and the walker” (99). This sense of variation characterises the walk as a journey punctuated by movement and pauses in places. Although his trajectory involves travelling from one place to another, this is not a straightforward process of plotting his steps, a serialised form of Miwon Kwon’s critique of inhabiting “one place after another” (166), but rather emerges as an active engagement with place/s that tests his own capabilities in travelling this land. Each day of his walk generates different thoughts and experiences invoking a sense of the performer’s connection and disconnection, affectivity and affectlessness in relation to places in the landscape.

The performer’s self-reflexive writing reveals different shades of meaning and emphasis producing a poesis of place, that takes shape as he explores gaps, separations and ambiguities in the cultural fabric of the landscape. The performer’s quest/questioning involves re-opening the temporal and spatial dimensions of history as he critically examines issues relevant to post-colonial Australia and his connection to people and places in this country. Walking and writing combine strategically for the performer as a way of “getting his story” (Minchinton, Kellerberrin 38). In the process of making and producing the walk his traversal of the land also exercises a critical value. His observations, thoughts and actions criss-cross the land drawing out the social, cultural and political dimensions of the landscape as he reveals dis/connections between places, as well as the kinds of contemporary relationships people enact with/in places. His story/walk re-historicises and contextualises what it means (for him) to be in this place and stimulates the reader to think about contemporary processes of belonging as requiring more than building and marking out boundaries and limits in the land to claim a sense of belonging in this country. In the process of walking and writing the performance explores the separation inherent in what it is to ‘be’ in place here in this particular social, cultural, environmental and political milieu and the kinds of longing that this activates. The performer’s discursive threads reflect concern for the landscape as well as the kinds of practices that makes us strangers in this place to provoke us – the reader to consider differently our senses of be-longing and, where they might be taking us.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ In this sense, I consider belonging as a negotiation, an ongoing process.

The productive engagement with place that walking generates unsettles the divisions inherent in discourses underpinning notions of being settled permanently in place/s or perpetually in motion. Walking functions as a movement of articulation and activation moving backwards and forwards between settlement and unsettlement (Crouch 50-1). The performer's translation of the experience of inhabiting the country is a constantly evolving relationship that evidences unsettling states of being as well as pauses, or moments of repose. The transitional aspects of walking I raised previously may seem to posit walking as an ephemeral act, disappearing in the moment of its enactment, but in this performance it is a form of mobility that marks time, space and place in ways that provoke a consideration of/for place in terms of meaning, ethics and value. Incorporating these dimensions into a way of thinking about place triggers an ethos sensitive to the places through which we walk. Macauley defines walking rhythmically and collectively as an action that involves "the repetitious act of ... falling forward, then rising and collecting ourselves into a corporeal rhythm" (196). The rhythm of this walking performance rises and falls and collects in the sense of the sensuous experience of moving through the landscape and the information, thoughts and musings which the performer (and audience-reader) gathers along the way. In following the traces of the performer's movements through the landscape I experience what Macauley writes of as "the convergence, collaboration, and confluence of the body, mind, and place as well as the sense of being seized in the walk by something more-than and other-than oneself" (197). In the process of walking the performer re-traces aspects of the landscape that have become displaced and/or effaced processing the cultural cues and codes of places and localities within this local region. This provokes, "an internal processing of that externality and ... a chiasmic crossing of inside and outside via ... the body" (Macauley 197). In the act of walking the performer is, I believe, activating and articulating an understanding of walking as a strategic response that can actively engage with those forgotten aspects and fallen selves/embodied subjectivities in the landscape. Criss-crossing the landscape places inscribe themselves into the performer's embodied consciousness, becoming a way of knowing and remembering the journey. His embodied practice also produces alternative re-marks and in the process revisions the relationship between time, (lost) selves/subjectivities and place/s. The performer activates a politicisation of place and (calls into question) its

intricate connections to identity by using walking to potentially trigger a different imagining and understanding of landscape.



Fig. 11. Murray River

One particular moment of the journey that I wish to engage with here is when the performer visits the site of the Pinjarra massacre. He notes that there is a lack of signage “forewarning the traveller that the site is imminent, historic, or otherwise important” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 43). On arrival, he remarks on the “erasure” occurring at the site with the mosaics “covered in leaves and debris from the surrounding trees” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 43). It is not clearly evident what the mosaics are meant to represent. In a powerful gesture of remembrance he attempts “to sweep aside the debris with a fallen branch” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 43). This precipitates further action as he gets down on his knees and sweeps the mosaics with his hands. Through this act, a sensuous engagement between body and place becomes activated, as he notes that “[t]he dirt, gumnuts and small branches smelled sweetly of eucalyptus” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 43). In being attentive to conditions on the ground and the surrounding environs a kind of memory is released,

“[I]like the catalysts and cues provided by a smell that takes us to remembrances of places past” (Macauley 196). His response to this place acts, both historically and contemporaneously, to open up a different imagining of the site in a way that speaks back to the power of the official history of this commemorative scene. Time, and the weathering of the elements have partly eroded the site making it difficult for him to read what is inscribed there, but he writes that “I understand this mosaic to represent mutual tolerance between black and white. I think what forgiving people blackfellas are” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 43). However, he also casts into doubt the truth effect of monuments when he contradicts the location of the massacre. He writes that “[t]he real site is behind me, where there is a ford across the river, and I will go there now” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 44). Through this act his walking performs a mode of operation with place becoming a path that cuts across what de Certeau defines as the “epistemic” modalities of the certain” to enter into a relationship with “the excluded” (99). Even so, down by the riverbank, Minchinton writes that “I can’t be certain” this is the place, but “cast some sand into the water as a friend has told me to do ..., and I say a few words of respect for the people who died hereabouts” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 44). His critical intervention at the site of history re-marks the place as a moment in time that can not be forgotten. This is reaffirmed when he raises the issue again in a following passage, writing that “it doesn’t matter *where* this massacre happened, but *that* it happened, and that it is acknowledged ... the killing and murder of black people happened all over this country” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 44, original emphasis). In travelling to this site, and reflecting on the magnitude of Indigenous loss, the local reflects a far more pervasive scale of atrocity. Dwelling at this site enables the performer to challenge the nature of history itself by confronting the way that conventional national and colonial histories are represented. His response inscribes and leaves behind a trail of questions that become fertile grounds for further reflection. In my own thoughts I am left to contemplate the residual trace of the performer’s encounter long after he has left this place and I find myself retracing what Macauley writes of as “the continuous trail left by the moving body and the memory of its motions” (196).

Minchinton’s walk shapes, and is shaped by, political and personal terrain as he negotiates memories and histories embedded in the landscape. Each step of the journey yields new insights and revelations but I believe some of the more powerful

moments are those which reveal the performer engaging with processes that involve loosening and untying the knots that bind memory to place as a potent act of remembering. His visit to particular places, such as the site discussed above, function to question the role of memory, the ways in which places and sites are used to fix particular versions of history and how this can lead to forms of misremembering and forgetting. In this sense the walk performs a recuperative function, as each step taken creates a link that stitches (back) together ties to places and spaces as a way of acknowledging the presences and memories in the landscape. The walk re-shapes and speaks of/for Indigenous histories in ways that contribute towards recovering and re-presenting a (lost) past. Minchinton's walk can be read as an act of reclamation, a way of connecting with personal/autobiographical memories embedded in particular places, places inhabited by his family. As he writes,

I want to be claimed. I don't think I can do that in a car. I want to feel the land with my feet, my body. I want the land to be written on my body, even if it's just pain in my knees. Perhaps it's masochism, perhaps my atonement. I want to know, in some way, the place and people I might have known already had my life been different, had my family been different, had the history of this country been different. To walk as if – the very terms of theatre – I belong to this place. (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 4)

T-reading through, in and across places and the landscape between Busselton and Kellerberrin, his responses are crucial in reconfiguring perceptions of localised spaces as historically significant both on a personal level and in transposing a sense of the change that occurs when one enters into a relationship with the country. The critical responses and sensory perceptions that are generated in the process of walking register a depth of engagement that travels across the surface of the landscape incorporating the contours, folds and conditions of the terrain while also investigating displacement, context and identity. In dealing with his own sense of displacement and estrangement, the necessity of walking is reinforced by his statement that “[e]motional & psychic journeys must be rooted in the physical, the corporeal” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 24). The entwining of ‘roots’ with the routes undertaken by his ancestors, primarily that of his Grandmother and the loss of her

identity in the space between places, become corporealized, inscribed and re-imagined throughout his journey. This kind of thinking about walking encapsulates the Benjaminian notion of journeys with the process of travelling activating an inner journey (I will talk more about this in Chapter 6). Walking facilitates this sense of journeying as the excursive dimensions entwine with forays into the performer's processes of thinking and responding towards place/s. Each step brings with it new experiences and opportunities for the performer to flex his critical faculties in thinking about, and connecting with, places creating paths that connect the performer with the landscape. In the process his responses also act as a stimulus for the reader, opening up pathways in the reader's mind stimulating the imagination (activating thinking) and provoking visceral responses. The performer enacts a complex tracery that involves thinking, remembering and disclosing his experiences to the reader, becoming an active engagement in/with place. The bodily labour of the performer is mobilised as a way of reading, writing and recovering the experience of place/s and movement between places, and this calls attention to the importance of the body in this process.



Fig. 12. Cnr Davies & Tilbrook Rds, 40km NNE of the Kellerberrin cinema, *Void: Kellerberrin Walking Journeying Through Place & Identity* (2005; 261)

A corporeal relationship with place “thickens the perceptual scene” according to Macauley who writes that, “in a vehicle, the surrounding is” more “frequently constituted as scenery and spectacle or postcard-like picture” whereas in walking, “the world is more readily experienced as inhabited placescape” (197). In a phenomenological sense he considers that linkages with place are lost, “often because pace overtakes and supplants place” (Macauley 197). For Minchinton, the experiential dimensions of the journey are important in becoming a way of knowing the landscape and making his story, re-stor(y)ing a relationship with his ancestral homelands. He writes that “[s]peed (or the lack of it) and effort are linked to getting that story” (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 38). En route he travels at approximately “3 km per hour”. At this slow rate of moving, there is a strong sense of invoking what Macauley writes of in his discussion of urban walking, as a synthesization of the surroundings in and through the body (196). However, synthesis is not automatically rendered in the process of walking, as Macauley remarks that “[t]he ground is not merely re-placed with the planting of new steps” (197). Rather the walker needs to be aware of “where one walks” raising the consciousness of the act to “a mindful and creative internalization of the enveloping landscape and skyscape” (Macauley 197). The horizontal and vertical dimensions of the landscape envelop the performer but are also internalized in ways that ensnare, entice, entangle, engulf, enfold and encircle producing a range of nuances in meaning that render the relationship between performance and landscape fecund. This is in contradistinction to landscape discourses which emphasize the notion of the pictorial and a positioning of the subject as being separate from the landscape (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Walking enacted as performance, I believe, can critically and creatively redefine these aspects in ways that engage with landscape through a consideration of the sensuous and embodied experience of being in the landscape. Backhaus and Murungi point out that “[l]andscape experiences influence cultures and are symbolically interpreted and modified through cultures” (9). Walking is a way of experiencing landscape, and as landscape “is always an interpreted phenomenon” (Backhaus and Murungi 9) walking suggests a way of t-reading the land, unpacking and elucidating what Donald W. Meinig writes of as “the beliefs, values, shared habits, and preferences” evidenced therein (qtd. in Backhaus and Murungi 9). Rather than perceiving landscape as grounds to be acted upon as “sites for the imposition rather

than generation of meaning”, it is important to consider the role of landscape as Solnit elucidates, “not as scenery but as the spaces and systems we inhabit” (Eve, 45, 47).⁹⁹ In this sense landscape constitutes the grounds *for* artistic practice with walking becoming a way of tuning in to the landscape itself and the kinds of responses this evokes. In this performance walking as a form of embodied activity in the landscape enjoins time, space and place, with the performer re-presenting the experience in terms of memory, duration, environmental conditions, topographical erasure/erosion as well as shifts in perception.



Fig. 13. Between Cattle Chosen and the Busselton High School, *Void: Kellerberrin Walking* (2005; 44)

The action of walking invokes a plethora of considerations of place throughout this performance. Walking invokes a sense of opening up places by moving through them and in the process releases the history of place/s (and the history of the performer). In walking the landscape the performer acts as an agent of/for change picking at the cultural fabric of the country in a way that speaks back to the degree of

⁹⁹ For an insightful discussion of landscape ecology as a dynamic process that considers the role of humans in ecosystems see Kristina Hill.

appropriation currently capturing places and bounding spaces, conditions that are based on measures of inclusion and exclusion. His walk creates trajectories that cut across some of these boundaries in interesting ways. For example, wayfaring on foot to his great grandfather's farm, the performer crosses over a fence that attempts to bound and contain what he terms, a "postmodern swampland" (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 12). This takes him into another place and the experience produces a different perspective of the country. He writes,

this is a magic place ... as I walk north, it gets deeper and deeper, until it gives way to river... The grass reaches in parts to my shoulders. I can hear frogs. Standing still, I see a kangaroo looking at me, about 20 feet away. We stare at each other for about three minutes, then I move slightly and it slowly moves into the grass. (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 12)

In describing the experience the performer puts the action of walking on another footing that picks up the inflections of Certeauian transgression. In the act of climbing over the boundary and inhabiting a "fenced off area", Minchinton goes beyond the limits imposed by literal definitions of boundary crossing (*Kellerberrin* 12). In this example the process becomes a strategy for reclaiming places relegated to the margins of cultural consciousness to provoke a different imagining. Crossing the swamp and writing about the experience potentially alters the reader/viewer's perception of this particular place. Minchinton's walk reveals ways of knowing places through embodying them, redefining them by moving through and dwelling in them. At other times and in other places, the routes chosen are away from the road, delineated paths or tracks, and although he is guided by the GPS he carries with him, the walk emerges as a process of negotiation with walking exercising a critical capacity for opening up hidden and contained places and as a way for considering the interplay between self and place. The performer's engagement with place/s expands the subjective dimensions of self-identity and self conceptualisation while also redefining places in the landscape by drawing attention to the embodying of place as well as the living presences that also inhabit these places. Walking is instrumental in generating new experiences and understandings of place and a unique way of performing self/identity. In this performance, walking is a step toward critically re-

shaping the writing of history, the history of the performer as well as the history of the landscape.

The performance of self-identity unravels in multiple ways throughout the journey with the interplay between place and the performer generating multiple personae and senses of self. The process of walking also activates memories of past selves and enables the performer to explore and examine self-identity as a fluid site of ongoing creation as past lives filter through the performance creating a prismatic landscape of shifting selves. Although the performer's primary motivation for the walk is established as a quest for knowing his Indigenous identity, self-knowing proliferates and is constituted in the space between experience and the 'making sense' of this experience, with the experience of self and place crafted into a form of knowledge for the reader to 'make sense' of. The performer acknowledges that the act of walking does not constitute his becoming "Aboriginal" for he asserts that,

I am not an essentialist. I don't think I possess any innate knowledge because of my Indigenous family. I don't think I have a special or automatic spirituality that connects me to this place. I don't claim any of this land as mine. Knowledge, spirituality, and land, must be taught, learnt, and practised. (Minchinton, *Kellerberrin* 4)

This is a significant point in terms of aiming to understand Aboriginal people and their relationships to land/country. According to Rose, the interconnections between knowledge, spirituality and land are "often misunderstood by settler Australians" (32). She makes the point that "[o]wnership and transmission of knowledge is a crucial key in understanding people and their country ... knowledge, in all Aboriginal systems of information, is specific to the place and to the people" (Rose 32). However, this kind of understanding is also significant, I believe, as it raises questions concerning non-indigenous relationships with the land. This leads me to ask, how might we proceed in making sense of the land and our relationship with it? This is an issue considered by Veronica Brady, who asserts, in a similar way to Minchinton, that

[t]here is no need to pretend that we are Aboriginal and to embrace ‘Aboriginal spirituality’... There are resources within our own intellectual tradition to enable us to come to a deeper and more truthful appreciation of the meaning of Country. But for that a great deal of work at the ethical as well as intellectual level is needed. (94)

Attitudes to the land are a particularly compelling issue in contemporary Australian culture and, as Brady recognises, calls for a shift not only in terms of epistemology, but also ontologically through a shift in consciousness. In activating this shift, Brady suggests, “[b]ecoming real in the deepest sense thus ‘means becoming present to and possessing Self, as living and knowing, in the same act of involving one’s world and communities’” (94). The process of reclamation, as it is practised in the context of Minchinton’s walk, is ethically considered, sensitive to the peoples he discusses and the places and aspects of landscape he traverses. However, his walk does not attempt to reify or replicate the profound connection between Aboriginal people and the land but instead aims to interact with and experience the landscape so as to generate an understanding of the interconnection between memory, history and landscape. His sensory engagement with many places informs a framework that is felt and lived, and can be considered phenomenological, post-phenomenological in the sense of reflecting on the experience, while also drawing on theoretical discussion to add further discursive layers of meaning to the process of coming to know these/his homelands. In walking, the performer extends and expands a sense of identification with place/s in the Australian landscape and in the process constitutes a ‘becoming’ sense of self that gathers and connects with other selves, people and places. He transfers this understanding of his own live(d) experience through his walking-writing to the reader/viewer, with the walking-writing becoming a process of translation that aims to provoke awareness of the significance of this landscape, both contemporaneously and historically.

Stepping into Places: re-imagining a migrant's journey¹⁰⁰

In *Breathing for Biagio*, the practice of walking is represented and explored by academic-performer De Clario through a framework informed by the lens of memory, live(d) experience and imagination. De Clario engages with senses of time and space in a mnemonic landscape, journeying through the past and present as a way of elaborating his story of migration, aspects of re-location and the affective elements that unsettle and define experiences of belonging. For the audience the entry point into this performance is through a form of writing that is personal, autobiographical and anecdotal.¹⁰¹ The artist's walk is enacted as a homage to a migrant's journey, that of a Sicilian wheat farmer named Biagio whose walk from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie in 1956 continues to be a source of critical and creative inquiry for de Clario. Biagio was one among many migrants from Sicily, including de Clario and his family, on board a ship bound for Melbourne, Australia. As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter as a young boy on the ship de Clario did not know Biagio personally, but he witnessed Biagio's 'melanconia' throughout the journey (Minchinton and de Clario 51). The ship temporarily birthed at the port of Fremantle and it was at this point that the rest of the émigrés heard of Biagio's sudden departure as he attempted to make his own way to Melbourne by walking overland. The death of Biagio after reaching Kalgoorlie left an indelible mark on de Clario, as he says (in conversation with Minchinton),

I've survived so much longer. It's like Biagio died in some quest to come to grips with the enormity of what he was experiencing. I feel I've somehow survived, and I need to carry him further, carry him along ... I'm no longer an innocent as he was in some ways, and if I can put myself in that position ... I can experience something of the impact of the land. (54 -5)

His identification with Biagio goes beyond humanist sentiment, to convey a strong sense of social and historical consciousness. The story he tells and the walk he undertakes is used to create a connection between past and present (with walking and

¹⁰⁰ There are no images of de Clario's walking performance in this chapter. I emailed the artist requesting images of this particular work however no copies were available at the time.

¹⁰¹ This writing featured in the programme for the NRLA 2003.

remembering deployed as forms of documentation). De Clario positions himself as an empathetic subject to explore how migrant experience has been imagined. This is rendered all the more compelling as the events which transpired are re-imagined and performed by re-reading and retracing a traumatic experience of displacement in the Australian landscape. The impact of such an experience on memory and imagination is incalculable but does lead to further philosophical and ethical considerations as De Clario wonders “how many Biagios have criss-crossed this land running in desperation from its beach-port of Fremantle fleeing in horror from the huge oceans that had carried them here” (de Clario 3). The walk is an examination of migrant journeys to a new country, and a way of exploring Biagio’s predicament, which the performer likens to “being launched into the void with no sense of understanding” (Minchinton and de Clario 55). In this sense the figure of Biagio becomes a site of criticality explored by the artist as he engages with its haunting memory invoking the complexities and tensions tangled up with this inheritance by walking to stretch the limits of the imagination and challenge the reader to consider their own understanding of journeying through this land.

De Clario engages directly with this lacunae by stepping into the void which, in the context of the walk, implies addressing a lack of understanding about the land from the perspective of an arriving migrant 50 years ago. This lack of understanding is viewed by de Clario as a case of mis-placed perceptions and place imaginings explicable in terms of the place images one carries from the homeland to the new place. The representation of both places in migrant discourse is an important consideration in terms of understanding the interrelationship between place, belonging and cultural identity. Mirjana Lozanovska’s discussion of the complexities underpinning emigration and immigration recognises that “[n]ostalgia for origins is common among all migrants, yet when origins ... are invoked, and they do not coincide with the origins of the host culture ... there can be a sense of disjuncture and disquiet” (188-9). These kinds of responses surface in de Clario’s account of his arrival in Fremantle and first impressions of Western Australia. He says (in conversation to Minchinton):

Our first contact with the land was a really low landfall, we couldn’t actually *see* the land ... everyone rushed on deck; but no one could see

anything because we were still probably 10-12 kilometres away ... we got to land slowly, it was an invisible landline, very low, the buildings were only two storey buildings. It was shocking for people from a mittel-European city ... It was a WA July day, grey, overcast ... heavy, leaden sky, a chilly stillness in the air, and a sort of emptiness really. (49)

This experience was further compounded by the fact that the migrants on board had been at sea for six weeks. There is a strong sense upon arrival that this place was far from what the migrants had expected. De Clario paints a vivid impression of their arrival as “the worst possible welcome you could expect for ... the bulk of people were from Trieste and Veneto, they were urban people. Fremantle was pretty shocking for them” (Minchinton and de Clario 50). The experience of migration is a complex cultural phenomenon and involves more than simply expressing place perception based on difference to one’s country of origin. Obviously, difference plays an important role in constituting understandings of migrant place-making, notions of home and cultural identity but de Clario adds further layers to conventional understandings underpinning relationships between place and identity through a framework that is both figural and excursive. In deploying the figure of the migrant and the practice of walking he renegotiates the complex and interlinked relationship between self and place (both imaginary and real). The migrant is both self (de Clario) and other (Biagio/Biagios) and embodying this figure in the act of walking can, I believe, also be understood as critically engaging with “the notion of the migrant as “other” occupying the underside of history” (Armstrong 208). According to Helen B Armstrong “[r]eflections emerging from marginal space ... will only have power if they are uncannily familiar ... when a sense of unease arises” (212). In this sense de Clario’s performance is an attempt to invoke an understanding of what Armstrong calls “the unhomely, the other within oneself” (213). There are parallels between Armstrong’s project of “de-placing difference” (203) in terms of the ways landscapes become linked, both symbolically and discursively, to configurations of subjectivity, such as insiders and outsiders, (Armstrong 206) and the ways in which culture and place become reconsidered in de Clario’s walk. He attempts to reconnect the disparate or marginalised aspects of culture by considering its relation to geographical place. For de Clario, “the ‘south’ is not only representative of “being a geographical place, but being about the remote, the

forgotten, a neglected location inside any culture, locality” (Minchinton and de Clario 57).¹⁰² Yet what has been forgotten or neglected does not necessarily show itself visibly in visual form. The sense of marginality he invokes is not evident in the physical landscape but in the experience which occurred in between; between Sicily and Australia and between Fremantle and Kalgoorlie.

In undertaking part of Biagio’s journey, the performer walks between Fremantle and Kellerberrin contextualising and exploring how the tensions between past and present, history and memory are played out in the live(d) experience of walking. Walking gives structure and focus to the performer’s critical intervention at the site of memory, as he examines loss and a desire for belonging which haunts this passage of country. The walk becomes an extended meditation on memory that aims to peel back the layers of an historical event to examine the unsettled/unsettling relationship which coalesces around landscape experience. In making this walk for Biagio, de Clario attempts to find a way of responding to “a feeling of empathy for his bewilderment” (Minchinton and de Clario 54). In this sense walking negotiates the relationship between ways of seeing places and the ways in which we make sense of these experiences. This suggests important implications for the present in terms of the ways that performance enacts a recovery of the past. The plight of Biagio invokes for me the sense of “something more” (Gordon 194) symptomatic of the experience of haunting conceptualised by Avery F. Gordon as “the paradox of tracking through time and across all those forces that which makes its mark by being there and not there at the same time” (6). Haunted by Biagio’s experience de Clario retraces the steps of this man imprinted in his memory performing a

passeggiata for him retracing the steps that took him along the great eastern highway to Kellerberrin (sic) I wanted to see as I walked just what he might have seen feel what he might have felt. (de Clario, *This Walking* np.)

De Clario’s response reflects a sense of ethical responsibility for what he considers would have been an overwhelming situation for Biagio of “coming to such a raw

¹⁰² See also Ross Gibson for a discussion of “the South” in terms of conceptions and perceptions which construct understandings of Australian space.

experience of the land between Perth and Kalgoorlie” (Minchinton and de Clario 55). Although it is uncertain what Biagio’s experience of the land was, the artist’s empathic vision encapsulates what I am attempting to articulate in this analysis by relating memory to place and the landscape as part of a physical as well as mental exercise and practice. Walking is a way of responding to notions of memory within landscapes, and as I will discuss later on, this is anything but a static and unchanging process. Walking performs a mnemonic function activating remembering and recollection, memory work that illuminates landscapes of the artist’s mind as a way of explicating the lived experience of Biagio to make sense of the landscape he passed through.

The term “*passeggiata*”, the spatial metaphor chosen by de Clario (meaning ‘passage’ in his native dialect) serves to ascribe a sense of cultural meaning to the process of walking across the land. Just as the notion of “void” encapsulates specific meanings and metaphors in relation to identity, culture and belonging to place/s, both in an individual and collective sense, in Minchinton’s performance, the use of the term passage signifies a particular spatial experience in de Clario’s performance. Undertaking a passage evokes a sense of a space, rather than a place, and functions to connect one place to another. A passage is an in-between space that is moved through and in this performance is indicative of the passage undertaken by boat as well as on foot. In walking through a specific passage of country, de Clario passes through an in between space, which comes to function as a space for imagining, remembering and experiencing. Walking activates both space and time and enables the performer to reconnect with and re-present for the reader personal/autobiographical memories connected to particular spaces and places.

The presence of the past resonates with cultural inflections in de Clario’s writing, which takes the form of a descriptively rich evocation of the cultural spaces and places of his homeland. The writing includes a ‘preface’ (similar to Minchinton’s ‘preamble’) for the reader, and is inflected with a range of meanings and memories in relation to the cultural practice of walking. He explains that walking was both a familial and familiar practice and writes in a stream of consciousness style,

that everyone walked where i come from my grandfather walked every day from the single room where we all lived to his little tailor's studio in the old part of Trieste during the war twice a week my mother walked 60 or 70 kms from Trieste deep into the Friulian countryside in order to return with a few shriveled potatoes and some beans perhaps occasionally some eggs and cheese rinds that could be spared by her country relatives throughout the same period on moonless nights my father would walk the 50 kms that separate Trieste from the habsburgian city of Gorizia where he was stationed he would throw lumps of limestone he'd stored in his knapsack onto the road ahead of him and then wait for the inevitable bursts of machine gun fire from partisans who might be lying in wait before moving on through the shadows my uncle attilio walked all the way from Trieste to Austria in the 1930's working as a traveling showman switching languages as he criss-crossed the border from one town to another as a child i walked after school to the cheap stores that crowded the streets on trieste's periphery returning home with the evening meal wrapped in bundles of wax paper bought with the few coins i'd anxiously guarded all day in my pocket everybody walked and no distance seemed too great (sic). (de Clario, *This Walking* np.)

I have quoted this passage at length to show how the practice of walking, linked to a context embodied in genealogy and historical origins, is re-imagined by the performer as he re-traces memories of a landscape that for him is familiar, yet also fraught with complexities and tensions. This tracery is a creative act of interpretation engaging with memory, landscape, self, walking, places and landscape and invokes for me a sense of walking as an act of cultural chorography, that is, a way of inscribing the landscape with memory by incorporating landscape into the body. The writing reveals a reflective space and I believe encapsulates an aspect of the embodied process of walking, with walking exercising memory and imagination. Walking functions as a form of recollection and remembering and in the passage above asserts a critical nostalgia. Its discursive mode provides snap shot images of the past for the reader rather than a descriptive explication that could potentially fall into sentimentality in order to fix and recreate the past. The underlying issues of

memory, experience, displacement and the relationship between self and place are brought to the foreground as subjects of/for performance. His written account offers a foothold for the reader to contemplate the implications of migrant experience in a 'new' country such as Australia and is a means whereby we might also think about the ways in which we inhabit places - how dwelling and moving actively shape us - and the kinds of knowledge we then create from this as evidenced above. Walking is revealed by the performer as a way of keeping connected to places and people and also provides a glimpse of the broader social, cultural and political landscape inhabited by his family. The performer's recollections are significant for what they present and how this is presented; in the form of a fluid and fluent re-telling of the past replete with multiple traversals of the landscape. Memory flows and in the process of re-reading the performer's place of remembering this comes to fill in some of the gaps of our own understanding of the plight of Biagio drawing our attention to an awareness of the different kinds of relationships between people and this country.

The performer's explanation of the notion of walking in the context of his homeland serves as a counterpoint to inform the reader as to why Biagio decided to attempt the journey overland. De Clario believes that "he would have had no understanding of the distances involved" as he disembarked from the ship in Fremantle and headed inland to make his way to Melbourne (Minchinto and de Clario 52). There is an assumption perhaps that for Biagio the walk he was undertaking would have been like walking to the next town in Sicily, and that being a wheat farmer himself perhaps he was walking towards "the famed wheat fields he had heard so much about" (de Clario, *This Walking* np.) The depth of meaning and comprehension the artist brings to walking in the shoes of another, acts to recuperate the experience but not in a way that seeks to bring a sense of completion to the issue of belonging, experiences of resettlement or the complexities which characterise the presence of history in the here and now. The embodying of absence in the landscape is an experience that can never be fully known. In this performance it suggests an experience both familiar and strange and provokes a way of thinking about the phenomenon of migrant experience several generations ago. This leads me to ask, in what ways is this experience different today, or is it?

In contemporary times the experience of travel and distance, modes of engaging with landscape, have been radically altered through globalisation and the proliferation of techno-communications. According to Solnit, “progress consists of the transcendence of time, space, and nature” transforming “primary experiences of being embodied” (*Wanderlust* 257). She suggests particular implications for how the relationship between bodies and spaces are experienced, perceived and enacted, in which side effects linked to the increased pace in contemporary modes of living are disembodiment as well as disconnection, a sense of estrangement in the relationship between space, time and the embodied experience of travelling through space. Furthermore she writes of, “the disappearance of that musing, unstructured space in which so much thinking, courting, daydreaming, and seeing has transpired” and with it a “decline of walking” due to “the lack of space in which to walk” and “the lack of time” (*Wanderlust* 259). In spite of this fact, one of the interesting paradoxes of this performance is that the walk takes place along a stretch of land which de Clario learns is essentially the same as it was when he first arrived in Australia as a young boy. He writes:

I’m told that the road between perth and kalgoorlie hasn’t changed much in 50 years and the route that biagio took then is essentially the same as one would take today: to northam and cunderdin then tammin and kellerberrin and beyond (sic). (de Clario, *This Walking* np.)

However this sense of sameness, of the past being historically continuous with the present in the form of an ‘unchanged’ physical landscape, is also challenged by de Clario. He draws parallels between the wheatfields in this region with the wheatfields of Sicily creating an uncanny effect of transposing one landscape over another, combining the familiar with the unfamiliar. The effect of transposition transforms the relationship between space and time creating a translucency between the cultural landscape of Sicily and the southern land of Western Australia. Landscapes of the past inform and transform landscapes of the present, with there-and-then interacting with an experiential understanding of here-and-now. The wheatfields are also juxtaposed, both metaphorically and literally, with another kind of space, that of the ocean. In this way de Clario re-shapes the experiential dimensions of space and

journeying, by comparing the sense of space of the wheatfields with the physicality of the “unending sea” (de Clario, personal email). He writes:

After all isn't the immensity of the wheat fields a kind of infinite oceanic expanse? Might he not have understood that his fear was not of an immense body of water but of immensity itself of the un-boundedness of space and through the journey across the unbounded land of the south came perhaps to understand this. (*South* 9)

This approach invokes a strange sense of the capacity of place/s to be representative of, and experienced as, both home and yet also disconcertingly a place of the unknown. Through words and images he reframes the representation of homeland and the great south land to consider another horizon of meaning. The effect of juxtaposition suggests, I believe, that the experience of two landscapes and the meanings and memories associated with them can perhaps mutate, and transform over time. While this may or may not have been the case in actuality for Biagio, de Clario revises a displaced narrative by moving it towards the realm of possibility. This is important because it also revises the migrant script to introduce an imagining, characterised by Carter, as “the conditions of a place-making in which migrants *qua* migrants enjoyed agency” (*Mythforms* 83, original emphasis). This is a process which may destabilise and de-familiarise, as the artist's experience of the landscape suggests, to provoke not only a consideration for perceiving “the strangeness of ourselves” but that this “can be pushed in the direction of a revision of what it is that we deem to be familiar, domestic, national, homely” (Naficy xi). The artist's revisioning of spatial experience unhinges the known and visible, “presentable determination of locality” (Benjamin qtd. in Naficy xi) to reveal other ways of seeing and experiencing landscape that push at the boundaries of imagination, both in terms of the reader's understanding and the artist's experience of the landscape. In walking, the artist encapsulates a double movement in which traversing memoryscapes of the past and landscapes of the present conjoin as a creative and critical act of interpretation that stretches the limits of meaning and comprehension. How we make sense of and inhabit particular places entails a writing, a reading and a walking that is in process, necessarily incomplete and subject to review. The artist's re-imagining of places renders them strange in a way that unsettles but also provokes us, the

audience-reader to take another look. And it is in this moment that a contradictory experience arises for me in relation to seeing a familiar place as if for the first time.

Although I did not witness this performance at the time of its duration, I was aware of the performer undertaking a walk through, what is to me, a familiar tract of country as I have travelled by car along this same road many times to visit family. The ways in which our own journeys intersect, run parallel to, or converge with others is something that I am unable to overlook. The sense of personal familiarity with place and locality in this performance (as well as Minchinton's) raises more fundamental questions for me of how the performer approaches seeing into places and the ways in which this reflects a different set of lived experiences of both place and landscape. At first glance what appears to be a performance of a personal history is cut through and opened up to other spaces, places and times picking up threads of what Gordan might elaborate as a "collectively animated worldly memory" (198). In this sense, the performer is envisioning what can not be seen or found in the physical, topography of the landscape with the act of walking becoming a way of seeing, similar to what Gordon describes as "[p]erceiving the lost subjects of history – the missing and lost ones and the blind fields they inhabit" (195). Perhaps it is my familiarity as well as estrangement from the places and localities explored by both performers that influences the ways in which I make sense of their walks. As I read the labyrinthian passages by de Clario, I notice shifts within my own relationship to time, space, place and embodied experience; I find myself inhabiting an in-between space as I re-turn momentarily to memoryscapes of my own while also switching back to the present, in the here and now, and with it I also bring a remnant of the performer's memories. And it is this experience that feels strange, and yet familiar, as I experience a state of dwelling-in-motion, t-reading another person's lived experience of a passage of country that I used to travel through. Or is this a passage of country that now winds through me? I wonder how other audience-readers are making sense of walking in this landscape, which areas entangle and what might be unravelled in the process.

The performer's intervention into landscape experience is a way of examining historical and social consciousness and as he undertakes the walk it becomes a conscious act of will, memory, physicality and imagination. The walk performs a

redeeming function in terms of Biagio/Biagios' experience as de Clario's attempt to consider the historical implications of migration and to reveal the ontological experience of being in this land today serves to open up a dialogue between that of an historical experience of Australian space with a contemporary understanding. Although the walk raises questions about the nature of landscape experience which I have already given attention to above, it also becomes a way of engaging with embodied memory in the living present. As the performer enacts the walk he becomes aware of how the process shifts his own horizon of understanding in terms of notions of self, time, place, embodied being and walking. In making sense of the embodied practice of walking in the landscape this shapes the performer's creative act of interpretation with meaning, memory and relationship becoming a process of identifying with place/s through a visceral, physical experience. De Clario explains, in conversation with Minchinton, that:

The first day I was bewildered ... I was completely at sea. I had no idea of what walking meant. My feet were blistered ... I was thinking, "What would have happened to Biagio? What am I doing? By the time I got to Kellerberrin I didn't want to stop walking, I could have walked for the rest of my life ... What happened in between – there was this sort of ... the elasticity of time ... at times eight hours felt like eight weeks, then it became eight minutes ... it was an incredible experience. (59-60)

The significance of being in the landscape is explicated in terms of an immediacy, of felt, lived experience with the performer experiencing complexities, tensions, uncertainties and shifts in perception and processes of identifying with the space in between Fremantle and Kellerberrin. Walking puts in motion processes of identification with landscape. In the context of this walk, identification encompasses a consideration for both person (Biagio) as well as places of the past and present. De Clario articulates the walk in terms of a necessity, as a way of being with Biagio. Being with unfolds as an empathic relationship, a way of tuning in to the affective, sensuous, subjective dimensions of experiencing the present. This sense of relationship involves dwelling through reflection, memory, and movement, experiencing the topography of the land by walking and translating the affect of the experience into writing.

However, the performer's enactment of walking also renders the experience of landscape and places as dis-placed, or perhaps re-placed, through the approach utilised in the performance. De Clario walked for approximately 5 hours each day returning the next day to begin to walk from where the previous day's walk had ended. He adopted this structure because it supported his need to return to work, "and be a working migrant" to find continuity between his creative rendering of place and memory and his work in the real world (Minchinton and de Clario 63). In the process of driving back to Perth and then forward the following day to the end point of the previous day's walk he became aware of a different level of experience, akin to "a different reality" (Minchinton and de Clario 60). In conversation with Minchinton, de Clario says that in walking, "you become much more attuned to the energy quality of what you are walking through, ... like a contour of the land" (60). His walk does not replicate the linearity of walking from one point in the landscape to another but rather interrupts the process as a deliberate act of self-conscious provocation that I believe can be traced to his belief that

[t]he walking practice is about one's unattainable quest as a migrant. Once you migrate you can never go back and you can never reach your destination, because if by definition you have cut your ties to the land of your birth there can be no destination of any real substance, you're walking in one spot in a way ... you are forever in linear motion. (Minchinton and de Clario 57)

The shape of his walk, in terms of its structure and content, is significant for the way in which it reflects on lived experience and then attempts to interrogate the nature of this experience and the thinking that accompanies it by folding the experience of walking back into his everyday life. The folds and cuts redefine the experience in a way that restructures the performer's conscious awareness and relationship with the landscape providing access to an experience that he describes as a "glimpse of this identification with heat, time, thirst, physical limitation, this huge expansion of mental strength, and of mental capacity to encompass just about anything" (Minchinton and de Clario 60). Walking gives rise to a shifting landscape of experience and a shifting experience of the landscape. The experiential dimensions constitute and are constituted by a framework for understanding. Walking can

therefore be considered a way for transforming understanding, and a practice of/for self-understanding. According to John Murungi, to understand is to be human but it is also important “to understand the manner in which the western man (we) understands and practices his self-understanding” (33). Accordingly, “[h]is dealings with land are his autobiography. Landscapes are scapes of self. The transformations are cultural transformations of self” (33). However, in challenging this self “from within ... is to open up the possibility of raising a more fundamental question about being human and about how being human inhabits and understands land” (33). In walking de Clario shows that this can offer new and multiple perspectives for understanding the relationship between self and place, and the ways in which a different sense of self and belonging can (potentially) emerge through an active engagement with landscape.

The notion of a journey lies in the shape it takes as a whole. These performers have proposed future walks with the aim being to extend the geographical reach of their respective journeys. This suggests that the walks are an unfinished story yet to be written and read. And perhaps also, that the notion of being at home, or implaced, is always in process rather than settled. Given the complexity of the framework deployed by both performers, their journeys can be seen as invoking a call for meaning, a strategy for opening up what ethnographer Kathleen Stewart considers “an interpretive, expressive space – a space ... in which there is more room to maneuver (sic)” (27). In the search for meaning, these walks do not attempt to pin meaning or memory to one place but rather to mobilise a space for further reflection in relation to experiences of emplacement. Walking expands the possible meanings and interpretations of the landscape in a way described by Stewart in which “world is mediated by word, fact moves into the realm of interpretation to be plumbed for significance, how act moves to actions and agency, how the landscape becomes a space in-filled with paths of action and imagination, danger and vulnerability” (Stewart 27). The practice of walking enables the performers to make sense of their inner landscape, the places and persons that inhabit their memories and imaginations, in ways that are implicated in a larger politics of place.

There is something compelling about the performers investment in undertaking these walks that speak of the capacity to enact change and to face the past by making a

space for its restitution in the present. The nature of their relationships to people and places form an ongoing commitment to convey a sense of responsibility towards the burdens of the past. It seems to me that the remedy, or that which is needed or wanting, emerges through the experience of undertaking the journey. The questions these performances raise suggest that there is still much recovery required in this country in order to feel a deeper connection to the land and the multiple places it encompasses. In this chapter I have examined how walking is used as a mode of response to address different senses of place that bring to the surface histories and memories embedded in the cultural landscape. These walks reconnect with the landscape in ways that honour connections with the past with an understanding that this will potentially shape future imaginings of the places where we dwell.

Chapter 4
Urban Encounters: Performing City Landscapes

Placelessness is identified by a complex terrain of symptoms such as “homesickness, disorientation, depression, [and] desolation” which are, according to Casey, inimical to the phenomenon itself. These symptoms “involve a sense of unbearable emptiness” that he links to a philosophical inheritance of atopia (“no place”) (Casey, *Getting x*).¹⁰³ For Relph, placelessness exhibits as “a sort of non-place quality manifest in uniformity, standardisation and disconnection from context. If a place is somewhere, placelessness could be anywhere” (*Pragmatic* 312). While there are different guises and expressions of placelessness it speaks of an “entire realm of feelings, acts and experiences of individuals in which they apprehend themselves in a distinct relationship with their environment” (Relph, *Geographical* 20). To lose a sensation of place is a contemporary phenomenon, an idea I explore in this chapter by engaging with theory and practice that foregrounds this idea of placelessness.

Exploring this idea of placelessness came about from a strong sense of disorientation I experienced in attempting to navigate my way to the Midland Railway workshops, the exhibition space for a range of contemporary art/performances which featured as part of the National Review of Live Art, 2003 (discussed in Chapter 3). Having started out from the northern suburbs by car to get there, I ended up driving around the streets of Midland as no parking was permitted within, or in close proximity to, the railway grounds.¹⁰⁴ I spent half an hour (or was it an eternity?) on foot trying to find the most expedient route to this location. The experience of being lost and temporarily unable to orientate my way towards the railway, even though I had already located it by sight and on a map, was an unsettling sensation further exacerbated by points of restricted access due to road works and urban planning and redevelopment projects in the area. In trying to find an alternative route that would lead me in the direction of my destination, I came to perceive the locality and surrounding streetscape in a new and somewhat strange light.

While a sense of disorientation may or may not have been the intention of the programmers for this Live Art event, it led me to reflect on how urban social space

¹⁰³ Emotions affect the ways in which people think about and act in the place-world. For recent discussion of this, see M Smith et al.

¹⁰⁴ Midland, located on the eastern margins of Perth, is currently undergoing a social and cultural program of revitalization that is rapidly changing its built landscape, infrastructure and social and economic conditions.

(in the case of Midland, undergoing a social and cultural program of revitalization) and its built structures and designations interact with or reframe the work of art/performance. It also raised questions for me regarding the audiences interaction with space in (terms of how walking through urban space can be used in performance to promote a form/s of interaction with the work) producing the work and the kinds of responses that such works can potentially invoke. Recent perspectives on Live Art in the UK recognize that the practices and approaches used are “alert and responsive to ideas of context, of site and of audience”. Live Art, with its “slippage out of galleries, theatres and restricted cultural spaces since the 1980s and into the public sphere, the real world” do not occupy “one location or circumstance but many”. The kinds of places and spaces used in the making and presentation of contemporary art/performance such as: “performances in theatres and actions in galleries, to artists working within civic or social spheres, in contested, loaded and unexpected sites” to name but a few, is part of a strategic approach that aims to critically engage the minds and bodies of the spectator, to explore and expand the possibilities of what the nature and experience of place and performance can be (Keidan 11).

How we experience the place world is described by Sarah Robinson as “a fusion between the internal landscape of our mind and our constructed reality” with our body mediating between both realms (21). However, as highlighted in my response above, the con-fusion of being disoriented in the context of a rapidly changing environment undergoing urban renewal, offers an opportunity to expand an understanding of our phenomenal relationship with the place world we inhabit. In this instance it also raises questions concerning what kind/s of encounters can potentially take place when moving through and interacting with the urban landscape.

To Casey’s way of thinking as we navigate our way through places this constitutes a form of “dwelling-as wandering”. He explains that,

[b]etween finding our way and having a residence – between orientation and inhabitation – there is a whole domain of encroaching implacement. In this domain we are neither disoriented nor settled. We wander, but we wander in the vicinity of built places we know or are coming to know.

Not discovery but better acquaintance is our aim. Or perhaps we prefer to loiter in the interspace, ... Places are built not only for such obvious purposes as shelter or prestige or comfort; they also foster experiences that appear purposeless at first glance. (*Getting* 121)

In drawing attention to that which we see, philosopher Jean-François Lyotard foregrounds the notion of the perceptual experience of seeing by proposing that,

[t]here would appear to be a landscape whenever the mind is transported from one sensible matter to another, but retains the sensorial organization appropriate to the first, or at least a memory of it. ... ESTRANGEMENT ... would appear to be a precondition for landscape. (183)

Although, he later reverses this idea by stating that landscape is a precondition for estrangement, it is the use of the terms and the way they function in relation to each other that suggest a dynamic way of thinking about landscape and how it interacts with the mind (itself a kind of landscape). However, because of the primary nature of place it can be easily overlooked. In everyday life as we make our way through familiar places where we live, work and dwell our sense of familiarity can lead to blinkered vision and habitual modes of implacement. Casey qualifies this assertion when he states that, “because place is so much with us, and we with it, it has been taken for granted” (*Fate* x). Not only this but implacement also is often obscured, for “we are implaced beings to begin with, ... place is an a priori of our existence on earth” (Casey, *Fate* x) He attributes the immutable presence of place as to the reason why “we believe we do not have to think about this basic facticity very much, if at all. Except when we are disoriented or lost—” (Casey, *Fate* x). During such moments there is an inability to feel located in place (or to locate a place), to establish a stable viewpoint. In response to this rupture between self and place the sensations that arise induce a process of reflexive negotiation in which the body, vision and place are implicated in reorientating the self back into place. This experience heightens sensory perception and refocuses the act of seeing in which our everyday world takes on a renewed significance.

Reflecting on such moments when we are provoked to think about how we see and experience the place world guides my thinking in this chapter. In light of Casey's exception to the rule of implacement I draw on writing by Lyotard to provide a conceptual understanding of "estrangement" as a counterpoint to "implacement". My discussion of these ideas are contextualized in an analysis of examples of performance that collaborate with the city using the embodied experience of moving through the urban landscape to reframe habitual or familiar ways of perceiving and interacting with it. I discuss specific examples of performance work by *Wrights & Sites*, whose performative encounters play with the dynamic of familiarity and unfamiliarity using, what they term, 'mis-guides' as a strategy for engaging with place and space. In the final section of the chapter I re-visit the philosophical ideas of Casey and Lyotard in a reflexive account of my experience as a participant in *Strange Strolls*, a sound/art walking project that took place through the city streets of Fremantle.

In contradistinction to Casey's affirmation of place as plenum, and a recuperative return towards being bodily in place (as discussed in Chapter 2), Lyotard's provocative essay 'Scapeland' offers a way of thinking about a placeless experience of spatiality, as highlighted above, by invoking the term 'landscape'.¹⁰⁵ According to Lyotard, interaction with landscape produces an experience of dissonance that counter-acts the inter-relational process of implacement. Landscape is defined in terms of an encounter, a spatio-temporal experience that he characterises as estranging as well as disorienting, in which there is a momentary disturbance or confusion in constituting the relationship between self and place. This encounter suggests a severance as much as a seizure of all sensibility, appropriation as expropriation. Sensing corporeally is complexly displaced as the sensation of encounter procures no synthesis of self and place or self in place but rather "an inner feeling of being outside". In this instance the subject is "[n]ot alone with oneself, but

¹⁰⁵ This essay is included in *Inhuman*. Although there are poetic registers which he designates through recourse to an emotional vocabulary, his conceptual framework for understanding landscape appears to be unrepresentable in terms of descriptive accounts which attempt to define a condition which escapes the known. This goes to the heart of the matter, not only of understanding landscape but the means by which it can be possible to know, the limits of knowledge and philosophy. Lyotard utilises the term matter as a way of understanding landscape. Whether or not matter is a metaphor, it is useful as it escapes the idea of landscape as form.

behind oneself” which temporarily produces an experience of being no-body, no-one and no-where, as “[t]he self is left behind, sloughed off” (Lyotard 187).

For Lyotard, an encounter with landscape produces a dislocated moment whereby meaning, consciousness and memory as frameworks which render (situated) knowledge graspable are temporarily interrupted. It is in this moment that landscape constitutes, what he describes as “those borderlands where matter offers itself up in a raw state before being tamed” (Lyotard 186). Encountering landscape conveys a sense of (the third space, or Casey’s “interspace”?) a complexity that differentiates and yet activates the space that is between self and place, as potentiality, “an excess of presence” (Lyotard 187). Tellingly, Lyotard describes landscape as “the superplenitude of this void state”, when matter exceeds definable form (188). The tendency to overlay meaning and/or reveal layers of interpretation of landscape implies to a certain degree, a sense of passive matter and what Lyotard suggests instead is scope for considering “untameable states of matter” (186). To his way of thinking, “landscape is a mark, and it (but not the mark it makes and leaves) should be thought of, not as an inscription, but as the erasure of a support” (Lyotard 189). In encountering landscape the experience destabilises the process of implacement creating a fracture between consciousness and memory, a temporary slippage where self loses its grasp on reality. In this formulation, the materiality or re-presentation of landscape can not be assimilated, as Lyotard writes there is “discontinuity with synthesis” (60). The cognitive/embodied frameworks which stabilise and synthesize experience are disrupted producing a state “[s]uspended between two mental intrigues” an effect in which the real of landscape can not be synthesized or recognized by the self, thereby invoking an unreal situation of estrangement (Lyotard 186).

In the context of Lyotard’s writing, landscape is considered distinguishable from “topography” or “chronography” as it is not form (what we recognise) but matter (189). According to Casey, landscape is

a term that does not fit easily into any neat spatial series ... Beyond the house and the neighbourhood lies the landscape. We tend to construe landscape as natural – paradigmatically, as wilderness – but in fact a city

constitutes a landscape, a “cityscape,” as surely as does the surrounding countryside. (Casey, *Getting* 24)

Whilst positioning landscape and place as dialectically opposed is, in Casey’s estimation “to go too far” (*Getting* 24), Lyotard’s engagement with landscape disrupts the cultural frameworks which discipline and define the term, by recognising its “shape shifting” capacity, as matter which simultaneously escapes the determination of form. As such, it carries the potential to disorientate self in the future, returning through remembering the experience of prior estrangement. Although an understanding of landscape via Lyotard provides a glimpse of something else, an encounter with “[t]he unreality of landscapes” (184) it brings into view the very nature (or strangeness) of landscape, its materiality and the subjective experience of it.

For Lyotard, “[i]n order to have a feel for landscape you have to lose your feeling of place” (187). In other words, what he is suggesting here, I believe, is losing a sense for that which is familiar. Similarly, for Casey, “[t]here is landscape wherever there is a felt difference unrecuperable by the usual designators of place” (*Getting* 24). Rather than simply positioning place and landscape in opposition so as to render landscape with a constituent efficacy more “intensely present” than place, (Casey, *Getting* 25) it is important to recognise the discursive use of these terms, their historical meanings, and contemporary expressions which recently have begun to operate in relation to (as well as overlap) each other.¹⁰⁶ While I am critical of Lyotard’s approach for making sense of landscape which proposes an oppositional relationship of place as familiar and landscape as unfamiliar, this is (perhaps?) to open up the possibility for thinking about other meanings of, and responses to, landscape. Landscape, for Lyotard, is a site of provocation. However, it raises the question, for me, of how one loses a feeling of place.

According to Casey, when confronted with the feeling of not knowing where we are,

¹⁰⁶ See for example Fuchs and Chaudhuri.

each of us attempts to move from the discomfort of disorientation in such space to the comparative assurance of knowing our way about. We do so by transmuting an initially aimless and endless scene into a place of concerted action, thereby constituting a dense placescape, that in close collaboration with our active bodies, guides us into orientation. Unplacement becomes implacement as we regain and refashion a sense of place. (*Getting* 28-29)

The oscillation between disorientation and re-orientation encompasses the potential kinds of responses implicit in encounters with landscape and place. In the process of moving from disorientation – unplacement, or a sense of placelessness, Casey mobilises the terms along a signifying chain of meaning from ‘space’, to ‘scene’, to ‘placescape’ (a substitute for landscape?), through to ‘place’. In conceptualising the phenomenon of unplacement-implacement, Casey carefully attempts to delimit the field of indeterminacy insinuated in Lyotard’s discursive coda of landscape, by drawing out the orientational inflections of landscape as a way of guiding his analysis of the body-place-landscape collusion. In sharp contrast Lyotard’s unsettling moment of embodied consciousness offers an acute sense of an experience constituted through encountering the materiality of landscape, to open up something else in the process which is not a (permanent) loss of embodied self but an opening to a possibility space. Whilst Lyotard captures a temporary moment of an encounter with landscape which exceeds the parameters of Casey’s recuperative return towards implacement, it expresses I believe a critical and felt disjuncture with particular (temporal and spatial) implications for the future memory and imagining of place and landscape.

In recent performance works that explore ways of reimagining the urban landscapes of cities, an important feature is how the city and the spectator are drawn into the field of actual encounter. Through the deployment of strategies and practices that draw on the city’s living material, cultural and social conditions, the city is defamiliarized or ‘made strange’. Through this the audiences relationships, experiences and responses to the city are brought into question.

It is at this point that I want to question the efficacy of estranging sensations experienced in moments of being lost or disorientated. These are not considered to be experiences that, on the whole, are welcomed. What at first may appear to be contrasting perspectives for thinking about place and landscape, when read together illuminate different aspects (for being-in, or out of place) that require reflexive negotiation. The theoretical framework above informs the following discussion of performative encounters with place and space in the work of *Wrights & Sites*. I consider some of the strategies and practices they use to reconfigure the audiences way of seeing, walking and interacting with the urban context.

‘Mis-guided’ Explorations of Place and Space

Wrights & Sites is a performance collective of five artist-academics, (Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti, Phil Smith, Cathy Turner and Tony Weaver), based in Exeter, southwest UK who create works that explore and celebrate the creative potential of space and place. Since 1997 *Wrights & Sites* have engaged with a framework of innovative place making informed by “live encounters: performances, walks, and performative lectures” (Wilkie 108). Their body of work draws inspiration from a lineage of urban walking and *flânerie* that derives from Benjamin, the tactical manoeuvring of de Certeau, and the political impulse of the Situationist International.¹⁰⁷ Although the group recognises the historical legacy and traditions that have contributed toward their own broad-based practice, they seek to both adapt and critically engage with the function and form/s of walking as a means for examining the nature of contemporary relationships to place. Through a sustained engagement with the city of Exeter as a cultural laboratory *Wrights & Sites* have experimented with walking as performative action and from this developed what they term ‘mis-guides’, which Turner describes as “framing devices and provocations for walking a landscape, often a city, in a way that breaks with habitual use” (*Mis-Guidance* 155). It is the idea of a ‘mis-guide’ in two of their recent publications: *An Exeter Mis-Guide* (2003) and *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* (2006) that I wish to discuss, in light of the questions raised in theory, to consider how such strategies produce an

¹⁰⁷ For an excellent discussion of the connections and tensions between the figures of André Breton and Guy Debord and between the surrealist and situationist groups associated with them, see David Pinder.

encounter which is designed to interrupt the sense of familiarity we feel in relation to place/s.

In 2003 the group produced a guide-book specifically for the people of Exeter titled *An Exeter Mis-Guide* offering, what they claim are, ways for seeing and engaging with this city anew.¹⁰⁸ Working against the grain of conventional city guide-books that are based on “telling you where to go and what to see, the Mis-Guide gives you the ways to see the Exeters no one else has found yet” (Hodge et al, *Exeter* np). *An Exeter Mis-Guide*, is a 90 page catalogue of ‘subversive actions’ for undertaking walks and tours of places and spaces in Exeter in ways that see and explore the unfamiliar. In reading the pages of this mis-guide, the directives given, while brief, are a blend of expert knowledge (practical know-how), playful wit, lyrical language and excursive instructions that propose fresh approaches for engaging with space/place. The mis-guide is a tool-kit designed to be open-ended and exploratory suggesting that the ways of seeing and experiencing Exeter are potentially unlimited. As Turner explains, “one could read the *Mis-guide* as an open invitation to reimagine and remake the city while simultaneously discovering it anew: it becomes a ‘potential space’” (*Potential* 385). Using the tools in this guide-book become the key to opening up a gateway between Exeter and somewhere else, an address that hinges between the familiar and the unfamiliar: “To Exeter. To Anywhere. ... An Exeter Mis-Guide is both a forged passport to your ‘other’ city and a new way of travelling a very familiar one” (Hodge et al, *Exeter* np). For those who might be curious to find other ways into a familiar place these mis-guides provide strategies that stimulate perceptual and intellectual faculties by playing with the frames brought into play by habit.

¹⁰⁸ The concept of the Mis-Guide was initially developed as a way for the people of Exeter to consider their own responses toward and ways of re-imagining their own senses of place within the city.



Fig. 14. *Blue Boy Walks* (April & May 2004)¹⁰⁹

The strategies that inform the Mis-Guides are derived from “the practice of mythogeography, which places the fictional, fanciful, fragile and personal on equal terms with ‘factual’, municipal history” (*Exeter* 1). Turner writes that the group’s interest in mythogeography concerns “not only the individual’s experience of space, but the shared mythologies of space that are also part of its significance.” By adopting a “multiple view of what constitutes place, we share many concerns” (*Potential* 385). Acknowledging the influence of mythogeography as a way of developing a model for action and thinking, Smith states that it is deployed as a strategy by *Wrights & Sites* “to resist the monocular meaning of certain spaces, where the hegemony of local history, the heritage industry or tourist trade commands its own constructions of the city” (*Contemporary* 119). A multiplicity of perspectives are evident in the guide book as there are walks incorporating “Touch Tours” (4), “sploring” (40), “Nostalgic drift (for those who know the City well) (37), “Memory Maps” (64), and “Urban safari” (58) to name but a few (*Potential* 385). Participants are considered to be collaborating with the ‘authors’ – the artists, (as readers-travellers) “in ascribing

¹⁰⁹ *Wrights & Sites* were commissioned to produce a series of five walks, each starting or ending at Exeter’s Blue Boy statue as part of *Homeland*, a month-long project (April-May 2004) presenting artists’ work in everyday locations in the city centre of Exeter. This series of contemporary art exhibitions, interventions, performances and events essentially posed the question ‘What is Middle England?’ (<http://www.mis-guide.com/ws/archive/blue.html>). I have included this image courtesy of Stephen Hodge to show participants undertaking one of these walks through the city streets of Exeter.

significance to place” (*Exeter* 1). To engage with the city, walking is the predominant mode of travelling. However the authors point out to “interpret ‘walk’ as journey, hop, skip, jump, negotiate on wheels, etc. as appropriate to your circumstances or mood” (Hodge et al, *Exeter* 1). The participant is encouraged to actively explore the frame of the mis-guide, to consciously tune in to the predetermined, municipal or official attributes of places while also engaging with other details they might stumble upon as that (materiality) to be deployed for reframing (and potentially expanding) perception. In this sense the frame for engaging with place continually changes. The mis-guides can be read as co-ordinates, rather than defined routes in space and time, for setting out along a trajectory and being open to what might be encountered along the way.

In undertaking a mis-guide, the participant is actively involved in an exploration of spaces/places, their orientation (or dis-orientation) taking shape by experimenting with existing meanings and contexts that are seen or sensed. A mis-guide is a strategy for temporarily re-casting the use/s of place and space in ways which decentre any sense of a fixed, expected, or normative (habitual or socially defined) relationship to/with place.¹¹⁰ The intention of the mis-guide, according to Phil Smith, is to provoke disruption and estrangement for the participant, “there being no deception, but rather an upset, a making-strange of familiar, aesthetic and industrial routines” (35). This is foregrounded in “Drifting Exeter” wherein to further assist in disrupting routine, the artists propose that the walker “[s]tart at an unusual time – very early in the morning, or in the middle of a working day, or late at night.” Or, “[s]tart at an unusual place” and use a “catapult” that can “disrupt usual ways of getting about.” For example, they offer the suggestion that “you could call a cab, hand over a couple of notes, strap on walkmans and blindfolds and ask the driver to drop you off somewhere without recognisable landmarks.” Alternatively, “you can leap on buses without knowing their destinations” (Hodge et al, *Exeter* 34). What was once considered familiar or habitual in relation to a particular understanding of, or way of interacting with, place becomes a route for navigating (potentially) the unknown.

¹¹⁰ I do not wish to define the “social” as a fixed construct that determines the nature of peoples relationships and ways of behaving in social contexts, as I am aware of recent theorisation of the “social” in Raymond Williams; and Avery F. Gordon.

While much has been written about “the political potential (or lack of it) within postmodernist theatre practices” (*Dramaturgy and Performance* 92) it is useful to understand the “détourned forms” (*Contemporary* 119) deployed by *Wrights & Sites* not only as modes of/for critiquing and dismantling “normalizing social constructs and conventions” (*Dramaturgy* 91) but also as performative modes that can be used to access and deliberately force a live engagement with both space and audience (*Dramaturgy* 197). This connects to emerging areas of enquiry within live art practice which, in attempting to “create a space for new ways of working”, play with the structures that form or frame encounters with everyday social space in a bid to re-frame or re-make the audiences experience of it (*Dramaturgy* 91). In this way the approaches and practices used in engaging with space can lead to the dramaturgy (or making) of the work.

Other walks give emphasis to an exploration of the city through the senses. In “Touch Tours” for example, *Wrights & Sites* invoke the embodied sensation of touch as a way of engaging with public streets that form the grid of urban space. The parameters given by the authors are designed to solicit both a sensory-tactile experience and the walker’s perception and imagination. They recognise that “[y]ou may walk down a particular street every day but only feel it through your shoes.” They ask instead to consider “[w]hat kinds of information, sensations, associations arise by touching the familiar walls and fabric of the city?” Anticipating resistance, for “[i]t might seem odd to stop to touch-tour your journey”, they propose (or aim to assuage the walker’s inhibitions?) that “it can be done momentarily without drawing attention to your actions.” They add that while “[t]his tour could be taken on any walk (you can invent your own route)” they “have chosen the High Street because it is such a public place to encounter this private experience” (Hodge et al, *Exeter* 4). In what follows for this tactile approach are a list of features designated for the walker to touch, such as bike stands, trees, commemorative plaques, shop windows, as they walk along this (or another) street. Rather than listing an arbitrary sequence of features along this route the authors (having prior knowledge of this place) include aspects the walkers in Exeter will have some familiarity with, while also bringing something new to the experience by inviting the walker/s to feel their way. To perform this walk in the way that the authors propose suggests a mode of accessing the public streets of a familiar place that may at first feel strange and perhaps (for

some) out of context. However, the encounter also highlights the use of touch as a reflexive strategy for exploring how a place can be both familiar and unfamiliar.

Reading this walk, and many of the other examples in *An Exeter Mis-Guide*, for me, calls into question how a place we know becomes familiar and what it might take to feel a different sense of place. The qualifier of ‘difference’ is that which distinguishes the familiar from the unfamiliar. In my analysis of Casey it is “a *felt* difference unrecuperable from the usual designators of place” (my emphasis) which constitutes an encounter with landscape (*Getting* 24). Similarly for Lyotard, *feeling* difference occurs in moments which estrange. In the work of *Wrights & Sites* the performative act of walking is an intervention that procures difference. For them, the kind of walk one takes/makes is a way toward experiencing shifts in the relationship between ourselves and the places we know.

The coupling of performance and place is a dynamic area of praxis that is continually evolving. Writing on this subject, Heathfield considers a range of contemporary performance/art genres to be the testing grounds for artists to explore “the dynamics of space” as a means toward exposing “[t]he moulding and containment of cultural space through the operations of place” (*Alive* 10). The terrain of performance both historically and now, makes use of practices by artists that aim to unsettle, dis-locate and dis-place to bring about shifts in both space and place. Similarly, this is also a theme shared by performance art and site-specific art which overlap and converge “in [their] investigation of the matter, conception and perception of space” (Heathfield, *Alive* 10). The ongoing commitment to this investigation within the field of performance is, according to Heathfield, “about a challenge to the propriety of place and its operation upon its inhabitants.” He believes that perceptions of place are “seen by many Live artists as a restrictive force to be opened and resisted” (*Alive* 10). This is a challenge which I similarly feel compelled to respond to (see Chapter 5), and an area of resurging interest for many artists today whose work aims to interrogate normative or taken-for-granted attitudes toward place and space. Making work in places deemed other to the “institutional places of performance production” is also part of the history (of Live Art) that aims to revision and renegotiate culturally and socially embedded understandings of place (Heathfield, *Alive* 10). For artists working within this oeuvre, the work that they produce often involves on some level,

calling into question place as “the product of particular rationales or ideologies that order its architecture, the habitual practices, physical movements and social encounters that happen within it” (Heathfield, *Alive* 10).

In response to the usefulness of this particular mis-guide beyond the city of its intended usage, the group produced their 2006 follow up publication *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere. Wrights & Sites* explain the purpose of this guide-book: “A Mis-Guide to Anywhere is a utopian project for the recasting of a bitter world by disrupted walking. Mis-Guides are your travel documents for your destinationless journeys” (Hodge et al, *Anywhere* 6). The significance of walking is an ongoing theme which continues in this mis-guide as an intervention in aid of the disruption of space. Not only does “[w]alking disrupt space. ... How and where and with whom we walk...makes a difference” (sic) (Hodge et al, *Anywhere* np). The instructions in this mis-guide, while similar to their earlier publication, play with the parameters of specific contexts, conditions and circumstances rather than being place-specific. For example, in *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere*, there are such spatial interventions as: “Commuter Belt” (6-7), walks to memorials (9), ways of Changing Places (10-11), engagements with the inconveniences of road works (14-15), “Static Drift” (18-19), Exploring “Edges” (50-51), “Walk for when you are feeling blue” (52-53), and “Returning” (54-55). The work of *Wrights & Sites*, along with other performance groups/artists, reflects what performance theorist Fiona Wilkie acknowledges as being “a wider move in recent site-based arts practices from a concern with one specific place to a more generic focus on experiences of spatiality” (109).¹¹¹ While the notion of being “anywhere” might suggest an arbitrary and perhaps, ill-defined sense of place; the epitome of contemporary placelessness, the idea of “anywhere” in relation to these mis-guides suggest any city, any place, where one lives, works or travels. What this guide-book aims to do, I believe, is open up and radically question the possibilities for thinking about and engaging with how and where we travel, wherever this might be.

¹¹¹ In recent performance work by artists, such as Janet Cardiff in Canada and Graeme Miller, Ian Sinclair, Lone Twin and Pearson/Shanks in the UK, there is a significant focus on engaging with walking as a format with which to create an interactive encounter for the audience.



Fig. 15. *Public Drift: Mis-Guide to Anywhere* (2004)

In this era of globalisation new modes of transport and communication are producing new spatial experiences as well as new spatial practices that change the way we see the world. While the generic sense of ‘space’ and ‘non-place’ continues to receive critical attention in contemporary theory the activities of the mis-guides are designed to promote ways of re-seeing the world, that recognise the fluctuating nature of contemporary life and with this the importance of finding ways of making connections (that can make a positive difference) for ourselves and places. “The aim, then,” of these mis-guides, according to Wilkie, “is not to conjure one generic version of place, but to encourage reflection on how different and specific places connect to one another” (110). *Wrights & Sites* practice (and philosophy, one might argue), is guided by a way of reading that is “a porous defining that conceptually reaches out” (P Smith 37). Wilkie makes the point that although *Wrights & Sites* ‘mis-guides’ do not aim to advance “an academic argument”, they are no doubt aware, as evidenced by the theorists and practitioners cited in the bibliographies of both guide-books, of the critical contribution their work proposes in relation to contemporary debates concerning questions of belonging and displacement (109).¹¹²

¹¹² The bibliographies of both publications cite a range of critical discourses on space and place by theorists such as Augé and Massey.

What they propose are alternative strategies for re-thinking our connections with place.

Like all practice it makes sense in the 'doing'. My interpretation, here, can only go so far towards signifying possible meanings and the kinds of experiences that can potentially emerge in making a mis-guided journey to Exeter or anywhere. Therefore I want to conclude this chapter with a reflexive account of my own experience of a performative walk, titled *Strange Strolls*. This locally based *dérive* unfolded through the city of Fremantle and produced a de-familiarization in my way of perceiving place. The writing aims to elaborate on some of the estranging and disorienting affects I experienced during this walk, and to further illuminate aspects of Casey and Lyotard's ideas on this issue.

Strolling the city

Strange Strolls, a sound and walking art project curated by artist Perdita Phillips, took place in and around the west end of Fremantle from 18 November to 18 December 2005 (Phillips maintains a website at – <http://www.perditaphillips.com/>). The brief for the project was to explore ways in which "a city [could] be experienced, and as such envisaged, in a new light" (*Strange* np). Fifteen local, national and international artists, mainly working in areas of visual arts and new media, produced works in the format of 30 minute audio tracks for audience-participants to listen to and be guided by while strolling along the streets of Fremantle (*Strange* np). Each 'stroll' began and ended at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery in Fremantle. I was intrigued by what vistas could potentially be opened up by shifting from the interior space of the gallery to the city streets, "where the experience of the city itself becomes central to the actuality of the work?" (*Strange* np).¹¹³ The sound-walks created for the project while thematically diverse, in terms of content and the technologies used for sound production, were required to include directions or navigational instructions for the participant.

¹¹³ An important consideration in this work was exploring the shift from the conceptual to the actual as a way of questioning some of the codes and conventions associated with viewing artworks in exhibition/gallery spaces. Foregrounding the viewers/participants experience of a dynamic environment becomes integral in actualizing the artwork itself. For more on this see Kwon; Giannachi and Stewart.

Although some of the sound-walks were created with a specific focus towards Fremantle, many were informed by sounds and experiences derived from contexts, movements and practices particular to other places, spaces and urban environments such as London, Switzerland and Turkey.

Of the sound-walks curated, the one I participated in was a collaborative work by Portuguese artists Maria Manuela Lopes and Paulo Bernardino, *2 untitled 2*. The idea underpinning this work was to explore some of the temporal and spatial fluctuations (the artists use the term - "displacement") that occur in the process of travelling. For these artists it is the relationship between "the imaginary and the real" which is at the heart of this kind of displacement. The material for the work is based on the journey undertaken from place to place - Lisbon to London to Singapore to Sydney to Perth - both by flight and on foot. What is real and what is imagined in terms of space-time travel is articulated by the artists as a kind of double-act between both modes, as '[t]he journey that was imagined when the artists were in Portugal is contrasted with the reality of economy class'. And, "[t]ime is further doubled when the real time of the journey from Portugal to Australia is paired with the real time experience of the stroller on the streets." The pairing of the real with the imaginary aims to invoke a double sense of space so that "[t]he listener is split between contrasting narratives: Lopes and Bernardino's 'global' experiences and the more mundane instructions to follow compass directions on the ground." The splitting and doubling foregrounded by the artists is not conceived, however, as a displacement which is disempowering but rather as a journey for the stroller that brings a series of adjustments to rupture any sense of an experience of continuity. The audio track is a complex layering of "safety instructions, the sounds of airport terminals, flight coordinates and soundtracks of in-flight movies". These are "imposed upon the geographic coordinates of the streets, the difficult paths and strange surprises, such as the monument to Vasco da Gama" (*Strange np*).

Undertaking this stroll calls for tuning into the co-ordinates given on the audio-track as well as tuning into the geography of the urban environment. As I set off along the streets, listening in by CD Walkman, I begin to notice shifts in the way I perceive and sense the surrounding environs. The sounds I hear on the audio-track disclose a wealth of information in relation to places both here (in Fremantle) and there (in other parts of

the world). The experience of listening in transports me to unfamiliar places and opens up channels to familiar places. This triggers complex processes of differentiation, connection and interpretation (*Strange np*). I get caught up in the play between constructed reality (out there) and the imaginary visions (in here) of the audio track. So much so, that at times I lose my bearings and momentarily forget where I am. This slippage invokes what Lyotard writes of as “losing oneself in a world of sound” (183). It is in these moments that I am elsewhere. Returning to the here and now I have a bodily memory of walking in place, but I am uncertain as to where I have been, and what I have passed by. This disruption is a jolt to the nervous system and puts me on edge. As I have no prior experience of this kind of art form in an embodied sense I do not know what to expect next. It is this sense of not-knowing that puts me in a state of anticipation. I begin to perceive myself from this other place which is difficult to locate exactly, but it feels as if I am on the outside of myself looking at (and listening to) both an ‘in’ and an ‘out’. Embodying these conjoined modes of listening and seeing opens up, what Lyotard writes of as experiencing, “the possibility of two distances: with or without glasses. As though the ear could filter a landscape of sound in two ways” (185).

In *2 untitled 2*, walking produces a different bodily experience of being-in place in ways that engage with the permeable boundary between inside and outside. It calls for(th) the body (as sensation, affect, excess, or presence), by drawing attention to the shifting relationship to implacement and displacement. My sense of awareness of where I am is continually undergoing a series of adjustments to the conditions and co-ordinates of the stroll. The interaction between listening, seeing and walking takes a strange turn when I cross over one of the streets. I have been given directions by a voice on the audio-track to head north-west towards the Esplanade Park which will take me to the monument of Vasco da Gama. My trajectory takes me diagonally through a crowd who are gathered at the park watching a band playing as part of a music festival. Inadvertently I become part of the spectacle as I try to find where I am meant to be. I catch a glimpse of myself being seen by some of the people in the audience. Their stares are a little disconcerting. I wonder what gives away the fact that I am not simply listening to music with these headphones but tuning in to a different frequency than the one they are listening to/looking at? Perhaps it is the presence of the head phones, (out of place in a sea of ipods?) or the fact that I have

not joined them in this collective gathering, or navigated around the edges of the crowd. Rather than looking out at the spectacle I am listening to something within. I am in this space but bordering on the edge of the inside(r)/outside(r).

As a result of the “pullulations” of the crowd at this community event I do not quite make it to the monument (de Certeau 103). Interestingly, I do not quite have the opportunity to fully immerse myself in escaping the ‘real’ anywhere as there are momentary encounters on the street which bring me back to the here and now, such as when a woman (a local?) passes by and greets me with a cheery “hello” – even though I am sure I look spaced out and elsewhere. It is these kinds of social interactions that have the affect of grounding me back in the social context of this city, which I am starting to see in a new way as I weave this complex “aural tapestry” on foot (*Strange np*). Although I am alone on this walk, I catch sight of other walkers strolling nearby, perhaps like myself experiencing the con-fusion (and delight) of being “[s]uspended between two mental intrigues” (Lyotard 186).

At times I stop to pause the recording and physically readjust the headphones which after 20 minutes start to feel heavy and cumbersome. However, this ‘burden’ also makes me aware of the corporeal dimensions of the frame imposed by this project, which the curator describes as deliberately ‘low-tech’. The presence of this equipment bears down on my head, drawing attention to an awareness of what is above and also as I am wearing uncomfortable footwear there is a nagging sensation of numbness from the soles of my feet. If this is strolling it is hard work and not at all some casual, easy jaunt as the term seems to imply.

Casey writes that, [i]n exploration the primary issue, so far as place is concerned, is orientation.” For “[u]nless we are oriented to some degree in the places through which we pass, we do not even know what we are in the process of discovering.” The distinction he makes is that in

finding our way *in place* by means of orientation –whether technologically assisted or not –is not tantamount to being *implaced*. When we are moving among places in an exploratory manner, we are acutely aware of not having a place to be; however efficient and

successful our voyaging may be and however many places we discover, we remain essentially homeless. For we are then between shores and between destinations, *somewhere else* than home, not “settled in.” (*Getting* 121, original emphasis)

In the context of *Strange Strolls*, being in-between opens up new dimensions for experiencing the city. Exploring the in-between is mind-altering and splits my perception of who and where I am. Switching between the modes of listening and looking constitutes a sense of being doubled as well as inhabiting two very different places. The experience (at times) is disorientating, as the affect of switching between places temporarily upsets my physical and mental equilibrium. In the act of walking sound registers as movement and pulls my inner perception back to the world I am listening to, or for. I am “transported from one sensible matter to another, but retain the sensorial organization appropriate to the first” (Lyotard 183). The switch between here and there varies in degrees and intensities but they are felt and lived as forms of pressure, pain, sensations, surface, the activation of nerves and viscera. Inhabiting the in-between registers as a play of difference in, through and across the body. The body is the locus for the affects of reading and responding to this urban landscape. However, the experience of reading also changes in relation to the body’s spatial and temporal location.

During the walk a series of compass co-ordinates are given by the artists, requesting that I turn or head in the direction of “south”, “west”, “north”, and “east” (*Strange* np). Following these directions does not always lead me to a particular destination or location. In fact on several occasions being mis-guided by one of these instructions would literally mean walking directly into the wall of a building. While this brings me into a close encounter with the materiality of the built landscape, it raises the question of agency and the necessity at times for pausing the recording, such as, when crossing a busy street, or when the sounds in the immediate environment interfere with the ability to hear and follow the co-ordinates given on the audio-track. When I return to the Moores Building the curator asks if I found the local monument of Vasco de Gama (one of the landmarks on 2 untitled 2) while undertaking my stroll. I am unsettled by the question (as I did not end up going there), but I mentally backtrack, re-tracing my steps to where I remember being in close proximity to the

place of its location. This makes me think about local knowledge and the different ways people experience this place. I live in the northern suburbs of Perth, and my knowledge of this city is not the same as it would be for those who live, travel through, or work here. Fremantle is a place I occasionally visit on weekends. It is the culturally exotic locale for inhabitants of Perth, “[w]ith histories leaching from its architecture – once a prison settlement, still a working port –it’s all at once tourist, indigenous, Euro, a three-decade-old artists quarter” (*Strange* np). I do not end up going anywhere near the well-known café strip but rather get to know a different area of the city by engaging with a unique and challenging way of seeing and moving through it.

In switching between the various frequencies imposed by the city and the audio track, the participant becomes co-producer of the work. Navigating, interpreting and translating a matrix of perceptual processes is evocative of what Heathfield terms “the live”, artworks which “take the spectator into conditions of immediacy where attention is heightened, the sensory relation charged, and the workings of thought agitated” (*Alive* 8). Part of the enlivening affect of the sound-walks are that they play with the gap between the visual and the visceral, as well as the relationship between foreground and background, bringing forward into the visual field that something else which usually appears as background material, or is overlooked and/or excluded from routine habits of perception. The affect of not-seeing (in a focused sense) means that what I do notice is texture, marks, aromas, sounds, distortions and ephemeral shifts. This could be what Lyotard writes of as the “untameable states of matter” which are (nearly) “impossible to describe” but what I believe I have experienced in the act of encountering this urban landscape (186, 187).

The shifts between the familiar and the unfamiliar are part of the dynamic relationship to place that is brought to my attention in *Strange Strolls*. I am left feeling a bit disturbed from the experience of strolling, but also strangely invigorated as well. I leave the Moores Building wondering about the nature of my encounter and what thoughts or moments of this experience could be re-activated when I return to this place. At the very least, I will be listening for a future echo of Lyotard’s configuration of landscape, for the possibility of experiencing the uncanny memory of it.

Chapter 5
Inhabiting Place/s

In my foregrounding of contemporary performance practice throughout the thesis, the relationship between place and performance can be seen as a nexi where issues of emplacement, be-longing, and identity abound. These issues are approached as open-ended questions, and use fluid processes rather than attempting, or even suggesting, that they can be easily resolved. In previous chapters I have drawn attention to the use of the body in examples of contemporary performance practice to foreground embodied approaches toward place-making. These examples are instructive for my own work; *inhabiting place*, for the ways in which embodied, reflexive modes of engaging with place can be used to inform the nature of artistic inquiry.¹¹⁴ They also pose questions that are aiming for a deeper level of engagement with place that can effectively re-language its discursive realms. It is the questioning of place in these works which give shape, albeit in a way that is continually changing, to the process of getting to know place. In these works ‘to know’ place is a process felt in the body. This is engendered through practices that open up access to textured experiences of space, place, time and modes of being (being with or in-relation to place), becoming a means toward taking the inquiry into new directions.

In my reading of these works, which are undertaken in ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ geographical space, I aim to elucidate the experiential dimensions of place. The forms and processes involved in the realisation of these works contribute towards raising an awareness of how we, as readers, think about and engage with place by emphasizing the significance of our actions in, through and across places as the grounds from where sense and meaning arise. Rather than working anywhere, the places chosen and the manner in which the practitioners work is closely connected to the ground helps to raise the profile of particular claims to knowledge, the process of

¹¹⁴ The reflexivity that is practiced in these works is informed by the experiential dimensions of being in place, and offers ways of responding toward place/s which reflects sensitivity to locations as well as contexts. It is an approach that can also be used to tune into, as well as comment on, the social, cultural, political and historical issues underpinning people’s relationships to places. Although most of the examples of performance work I have analysed throughout this thesis are based in Australia, I believe they share a relevance to places in other countries where the impact of colonisation and colonial activities have become part of the perception of the landscape and its cultural imag(in)ing. A reflexive framework used in creative practice to help frame ways of making sense of place can generate a multi-layered process. For further discussion of some of the theoretical issues which inform recent ways of understanding reflexive approaches in research methods, see Frederick Steier. Also, for an insightful discussion of reflexivity as a framework for ‘making sense’ of fieldwork processes, see Heidi J. Nast.

meaning and consciousness as well as guide the aims of the practitioners inquiries into place. The exploratory, experimental and experiential modes of these works are difficult to pin down to one place, however, as they convey a relevance that exceeds the parameters of location to reverberate across the landscape. These works draw attention to ways of thinking about the very grounds upon which our shared human existence depends and the ways in which artistic inquiry can provoke us to reconsider our own relationships to the places that are integral to making sense of who and where we are. In experiencing these works the parameters of my own perceptions have shifted. They have stimulated my inquisitive nature to want to explore further the creative and critical potential of places, especially the relationship between place and performance.

Contemporary performance practice engages with a broad range of thematic and conceptual concerns and the work of many artists are informed by ideas about, and issues of, place. The examples I have discussed, while each using different methodologies and frameworks, are also important I believe for the ways that they interrogate notions of a bounded sense of place. Emergent within place-based inquiry are works that are attempting to evoke experiences of place, that challenge conventional as well as cultural assumptions about place, and which use approaches that propose new lenses and perspectives in coming to know a place.¹¹⁵ In the process a plethora of meanings are produced offering alternative understandings and experiences of place. In recent investigations focusing on the relationship between place and performance, particularly within site-based performance, the issue of the hermeticism of place is an important aspect, as this informs not only the content and context of the work but also its critical edge. The kinds of relationships with place to emerge in praxis reveal how place is becoming defined, explained, interpreted, contested, embraced, and re-imagined. This area of work has led to critical terminologies, critiques of existing ones, and models of performance that seek to

¹¹⁵ It is important to recognise that people who participate in, or attend such place-based works, may hold diverse assumptions about place. Throughout this thesis, in both my use of theory and analyses of performance, I have been attempting to challenge and dismantle notions of a bounded sense of place. This is a recurrent perspective embedded in understandings of place in Western philosophy. However, I am hopeful that this can be changed, for as Stuart Hall points out, “[i]t is us – in society, within human culture – who make things mean, who signify. Meanings, consequently, will always change, from one culture or period to another.” (61)

challenge some of the static assumptions underpinning spatial terms which are used to represent place both in theory and practice.

My own questioning of place is similarly a response that aims to explore and challenge the containment of place, by critically engaging with some of the “thoughts, discourses and nominations by which place is solidly constituted” (Heathfield, *Alive* 11). Ideas about place in terms of the meanings that relate to notions of property, propriety, proper behaviour and possession, continue to inform interpretation and critique both in performance theory and practice.¹¹⁶ Notions of proper/ty that haunt meanings of place, particularly in readings about contemporary Australia, have a particular discursive weight for me. I am aware of this theoretical inheritance and I hope that my research can help to challenge some of these deeply entrenched ideas about place. I am also mindful that the process I am attempting to engage with, experience and describe will be informed by the particular interplay between local fields of engagement, the kinds of activities undertaken as well as my own affective, embodied responses in turn.

In the following sections of this chapter I reflect on some key experiences that resonated throughout my fieldwork process. These experiences were connected to issues concerning access, inclusion and exclusion. I focus in particular on the preliminary stages of my research in Perth (2001-2003); a quest to find and be given access to a place that would/could inform my research-led-practice. My purpose is to show how these aspects contributed towards a lived experiential research framework shaping the grounds of my knowing, as well as the kinds of questions and issues that undertaking performance-research potentially raise.

Exploring Places

The beginnings of my research-led practice consisted of travelling both on foot and by car through city and suburbia looking at the landscape of Perth that for me constitutes the place I call home. This was a strange kind of experience that for me

¹¹⁶ Some of these ideas underpin discussions of place in Hill and Paris; and Richard Gough, Mark Minchinton, and David Williams.

became increasingly unsettling and estranging. I had an uncomfortable feeling that I did not know this place well and that perhaps I should have more of a sense of belonging both personally and as a creative practitioner having lived here now for 20 years. The sense of ambivalence I had toward this place during my research, made me feel at times as if I was in the ‘wrong’ place and that perhaps a ‘right’ place could be located elsewhere.¹¹⁷ By both necessity and choice the constraints of undertaking place-based research entailed locating my self somewhere, but not just anywhere. *Where*, however, became an ongoing question. The inability to ‘locate’ a place for my practice (has) led me to reflect on my own responses so as to consider where my observations were leading me and how I was *making sense* of the places I encountered. My lived experience of this place existed, I felt, on a surface level. Therefore, what I believed I needed to do was to experience this place anew with a geographical awareness open to curiosity and critical reflection. As Stilgoe points out, “[a]lways analysis begins in just looking around, noticing the nuance that becomes portal” (*Landscape and Image* 1). In the act of ‘just looking’, however, I became acutely aware of a home-place landlocked, with all kinds of enclosures and partitioning acting as mechanisms to constrain and contain place. These markers of division, sub-division and material exclusions in place reinforced to me the sense of ownership and entitlement at work informing, whether consciously or unconsciously, part of our everyday social experience (because embedded) and cultural relationship with place. The physical and socio-cultural nature of boundaries came to be a nuanced pattern throughout my preliminary investigation guiding the ways I was looking into place.

The recurring presence of boundedness in relation to places continually caught my eye during my peregrinations through the sub/urban environment. My experience of boundaries and boundary markers, especially in the form of fences, gates, locks and barbed wire, were evidence of a relationship with place based on separating inside from outside, the public from the private, the closed from the open. This to my mind

¹¹⁷ This particular feeling of ill-fit or ill-placement in relation to myself and place/s was an ongoing experience throughout the preliminary process of fieldwork and later stages of research. While this schism is difficult to explain the material, social, economic and cultural conditions of my personal life and living conditions are implicated in the ‘felt’ dimensions of this experience as well as the ruptures, sense of transience, ongoing relocations and continuous travelling that also featured throughout my research. For an interesting critique of the issue of being between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ places, see Chapter 6 in Kwon.

was the ‘proper’ at work, a cultural mind set reflected in the built landscape through the use of boundaries which are put in place (often surrounding places) as a means to sustain both literally and ideologically a particular relationship with space and place based on claiming ownership. To possess place, to lay a claim to ownership through “[m]arking and visual cues”, are analogous “to vision’s objectification of the thing seen” and “to vision’s disinterest in the seen object’s own point of view” (C. Rose 272). While the assertion of the boundary is a very clear visual cue that acts to embody place as property it is also understood as serving the purposes of the owner, to legitimate their claim, and with this their right to define the meanings and use of space and place through establishing limits to control access/ibility. “Enclosure” is the default setting of this country, an historical legacy which endures both in the language we use about places and our relationship with the landscape (Arthur 115-117). The role of place-boundedness raises questions and issues connected to cultural attitudes, human values, social policy, planning, power, identity and ownership. Walking along the boundaries that exist in this landscape became for me a way of reading place as well as a stimulus for imagining entering into a conversation with place, especially places that appeared to me to be out of bounds.

Moving through Perth’s post-industrial landscape my embodied reflexes, combined with the terrain I was experiencing, began to shape the grounds for critical reflection providing the clues and cues for my own research-led-practice. Places I noticed becoming increasingly ensnared within my field of vision were those that pulled at my focus evoking visceral and kinaesthetic responses. I found myself drawn toward places in ruins, and in particular, buildings with crumbling materialities charged with the remnants of their industrial pasts. My curiosity led me to seek out many such places, two of which included the East Perth Power Station, and the Maylands Brickworks (I discuss them both further on in this chapter). The husks of industrial architectures and other locations replete with historical significance belong to a time when they once functioned as part of everyday life. Today, however, many of these 19th and 20th century industrial relics exist as sites that speak of vacancy, abandonment and dereliction, their former uses left by the wayside. Industrial places rendered redundant through rapid modernisation are frequently utilised (in Australian as well as other countries around the world) as the contexts for experimental performance practices, and in particular site-specific work, enabling the artist to

expand their codes of practice and build new lexicons. To many artists, including me, places with traces of bygone histories are fecund environments that stimulate the senses and imagination providing inspiration for creative invention. Devising performances in places with evidence of prior occupations, such work aims (at the very least) to provoke a questioning in relation to ways of understanding and making sense of the histories embedded within and calls for re-imagining their possible futures.¹¹⁸

The Pastness of Places

In recent years many of the “received ideas about heritage as awe-inspiring monumental architecture” have been undergoing transformation (De Jong and Rowlands 21). This is increasingly reflected today by the diversity of places considered worthy of inclusion as monuments and memorials for social remembering.¹¹⁹ A growing interest in places associated with the ‘ordinary’ and the ‘everyday’ is part of a contemporary shift ‘democratising’ heritage practices to include the vernacular as a valuable source of cultural knowledge. A consideration of former industrial areas is “one of the major beneficiaries of this vernacular mode”, with particular socio-cultural, economic and political benefits involved in re-visioning and reclaiming the heritage of peoples and communities that have, for a long time, been excluded from the historical imagination (Dicks 37-38). Places of historical value, become valuable as such through the claims of heritage processes and practices implemented by heritage ‘experts’ which aim to preserve or resuscitate a sense of time and place considered to be lost or rapidly disappearing. Amidst what is perceived to be the accelerating placelessness of today’s world the cultural uses of places recognised as being from the past or attributed with historical value are believed to contribute toward the creation of place identities, and by implication, a sense of belonging to place. This raises, for me, a series of questions, such as: Who is doing the imagining, and for whom? What sense of the past or past-ness of a place is being imagined, and how? What forms of representation, display, or engagement are

¹¹⁸ For further discussion of site-specific performance work, see Pearson (1994) and Pearson/Shanks (2001).

¹¹⁹ For a comprehensive critique of authorised heritage discourses and the authorizing institutions of heritage see Laurajane Smith.

being used? How is value, meaning, and significance attributed? How is value measured, qualified today?¹²⁰ And what do uses of heritage places say about the present? What function do these places currently perform?

Place Imagining

My investigation of industrial ruins and other locations connected to the recent past revealed that while many no longer function as useful living environments the future uses, for many of these places, also remain uncertain.¹²¹ I recognized, perhaps intuitively, that this state of uncertainty was a good opportunity for my own engagement with place. While the fragments and residual traces of history left behind in, on, and around these places provide fodder for the critical and creative mind, the allure of many of these places for me was also that they appeared at first glance uninhabitable or no-longer-occupied, at least by human beings anyway.¹²² My intention was to physically inhabit at least one of these places as well as the surrounding environs and use the process as a stimulus for performance. The purpose, I hoped, of this kind of engagement with place would enable me to re-make the place by using space creatively as well as open up these places to the public in a bid to offer an alternative place of/for public and social imagining. The different types of industrial places I visited elicited strong sensory responses as well as actively engaged my imagination. Imagining is a sense-making process, and while

¹²⁰ The cultural capital implicit in ideas linking heritage, place and identity rely on particular representations of the past in relation to both time and place. While contemporary uses of heritage places are considered socio-cultural, economic and political resources, the value of place-centred heritage as cultural capital is that it locates destination tourism and aids urban and regional regeneration and redevelopment. The display of 'pastness' is a capitalistic enterprise according to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, used to elicit nostalgia in a bid to reanimate or realise certain versions of the world, a time and space/place where and when people had roots in places. In conveying a sense of the past, interpretations of heritage places often use narratives in the construction of histories of place to foster a particular version of the past. However, during the time I was exploring these kinds of places there were minimal narratives (and signage) in situ to explain the histories. While some areas of Perth have established heritage as part of interpreting and representing the identities of places there are other areas where this is very much in process or undergoing review. Many of the places that I looked at presented 'pastness' and the fences surrounding them also reaffirmed the idea of value embedded in heritage discourses.

¹²¹ See Alois Riegl for a good discussion of historical value and use value in relation to the role and function of monuments. While many of the buildings I encountered during this process were listed on municipal heritage registers the material decay was an area of concern to many of the owners and managers whom I had conversations with. For many of these places the issue was connected to a lack of monetary investment.

¹²² I am aware that these places are also the habitats of insects, animals such as birds and rodents, as well as weeds and other flora.

this can be considered a personal way of making sense of the world, there is also a political dimension to imagining that connects to broader cultural processes. “Senses of place”, according to Ashworth and Graham, are “the products of the creative imagination of the individual and of society” and are significant in terms of constituting identities and processes of identification with places (9).



Fig. 16. The East Perth Power Station, (photograph courtesy of EPRA)

The East Perth Power Station complex was one of many vacant/vacated places to capture my imagination.¹²³ Listed on the Heritage Council of Western Australia’s interim heritage register in 1994 the power station is recognised as having a high level of cultural heritage significance due to its aesthetic, historical and technological values. While these formalised heritage designations inform the criteria which

¹²³ The East Perth Power Station is a former industrial area close to the city centre of Perth. Driving along the freeway one catches a passing glimpse of this industrial relic. The Power Station consists of derelict buildings, remnant machinery and equipment, with its location bounded by East Parade, Summers Street, the Swan River and the Graham Farmer Freeway. This ex-industrial building first constructed in 1913 was, in its formative years, influential to the industrial development of Western Australia providing electricity to the community living in the metropolitan area and in later years to the south-west of the State. Since being decommissioned in 1981, the power station has remained unused.

identify the value of this former industrial place the record also states concern for its present condition, future use and need for preservation.¹²⁴ With the onset of gentrification and the beginnings of ‘urban renewal’ (occurring at the time of undertaking this investigation) throughout East Perth and the surrounding areas in close proximity to the city centre, the role of the Power Station has drawn intense scrutiny but remains an ongoing question.¹²⁵ Selected for future redevelopment in 2004 with the aim of being used as a public amenity some of the suggested uses proposed have included a museum, performance space, sports stadium as well as an art gallery. The East Perth Redevelopment Authority (EPRA), an urban redevelopment agency, believes that an investment in this place will be a commercial and cultural asset to the area, aiding in urban regeneration.¹²⁶ In redeveloping this 8.5 hectare site an emphasis on the waterfront location will play a significant part in realising this vision.

‘Revitalising’, ‘reinvigoration’, ‘renewal’ and ‘regeneration’ are frequently key descriptors used in promoting the redevelopment of urban and regional centres/areas.¹²⁷ Planning authorities and professional place marketers often capitalise on the heritage aspects of places, if these are present, to represent and locate a sense of history and community.¹²⁸ The ideas underpinning many of these

¹²⁴ The Heritage Council note the erosion of its cultural capital through changes in the surrounding contexts (see Heritage Council 2002). At the time of first writing about my fieldwork process there were no official plans pending for the redevelopment of this heritage place. Since undertaking my preliminary investigation of places with historical significance in and around Perth there has been a growing interest in transforming these useless and decaying places into useful and vibrant places as a step towards improving the profile of the urban environment.

¹²⁵ I contacted the East Perth Redevelopment Authority in 2002 to ask for permission to use the Power Station for a performance as part of my PhD research. However, they informed me that this use of the Power Station would not be possible due to future planning proposals which included cleaning up the site and stabilising its existing material structure. I made other requests to EPRA throughout 2003 in regards to the creative use of derelict buildings and heritage places located in East Perth but on each occasion my requests were denied.

¹²⁶ There was minimal information available on the web in 2002 with regards to EPRA and their affiliated association with urban renewal projects in Perth. Their current web site provides links (both retrospective and current) to urban renewal projects and this includes information about the various stages of planning proposed for the redevelopment of the East Perth Power Station.

¹²⁷ I am writing about this because during this process of exploring places I saw a huge billboard, installed by EPRA, in close proximity to the East Perth Power Station with the words “urban regeneration”.

¹²⁸ The difficulty in realising this vision, however, is largely due to finding the necessary economic resources. There may, however, be other less tangible values of places that hold significance and meaning for people. Places of value may not have the tangible representativeness of heritage but may be places people identify with through ongoing use and engagement. While in more recent years planning authorities are becoming increasingly aware of the vested interests of people who have

enterprises, including proposals for places such as the East Perth Power Station, tap into notions of place-making and community, often by proposing that redevelopment will in itself produce a vibrant place to generate community. In these ‘expert’ contexts, the sense of ‘community’, yet to be created or revitalised, often deploys as strategy the socio-cultural and historical threads of the landscape to substantiate these claims. History and heritage places are often elicited as synonyms for ‘roots’, with links to the past. If this is not evident through the presence of the built environment then it is referred to by citing sections of the natural landscape, such as trees, rivers, bushlands, native vegetation, etc. Ultimately, however, redevelopment projects at some level involve changing the geophysical fabric of the built and natural environment as the criteria for revitalising place and community. In this sense ‘community’ is both absent and present in projects that aim to re-make place/s. Such projects reveal tensions that can be seen to emerge between the aims of redevelopment and the aims of heritage.¹²⁹

In the case of the East Perth Power Station the Heritage Council’s assessment notes that its “importance as a dominant landmark has diminished in recent years” in part “because of new development in the surrounding areas”. What this suggests here is that redevelopment of the surrounding landscape impacts (negatively) on heritage significance as the changes that new development brings alters the existing context within which heritage is emplaced.¹³⁰ In revitalising place/s and by implication community, which redevelopment projects promise to produce, this raises the question of what then happens to the meanings, associations and layers of significance already in place, both in relation to the connections people might currently have with such places and according to the designations of heritage? I wondered what sort of community was being imagined in relation to this place.¹³¹

particular affiliations with places evident in stages of community consultation and dialogue prior to the implementation of change to the geophysical environment.

¹²⁹ This is not to undermine such planning initiatives but simply to point out that regenerating an area can be at odds with contemporary contexts and the plethora of ways that places and people are relationally entwined.

¹³⁰ It is not always the case that heritage is at odds with redevelopment. In the case of the East Perth Power Station, the problem is in conceptualising how to incorporate the present with the past, in terms of rehabilitating this place for a contemporary use that is also mindful of the historical/heritage attributes.

¹³¹ Theorists such as Doreen Massey write that community often entails exclusion, see also Benedict Anderson.

What does a 'revitalised' place and community look and feel like? Does an existing place need to be geo-physically or radically altered for revitalisation and community to emerge?

Walking and driving through the area of East Perth I pass through some of the nearby suburbs where there is evidence of economic and social privilege. The signs of affluence suggest particular kinds of values and ideas about what this place should be and raise questions concerning who belongs here and who does not. While community does not necessarily reside in or at a particular geographical location it is the imagining of community and how this corresponds to a sense of (social) place in processes of policy and planning that are used in attracting financial investment. My preliminary investigation of places, such as the Power Station, and the sub/urban landscapes within which they are emplaced, overlap and converge with a range of diverse issues connected to heritage matters as well as urban planning place-making agendas and the kinds of questions that they raise. Exploring place/s is engendering an awareness of the different kinds of imaginings currently at work in place and the language being used in shaping such visions. Rather than seeing heritage and redevelopment matters as antithetical to my own enquiry they are enabling me to see specific places as potential sites of/for *documentation*, *speculation* and *intervention*. I am as yet to consider in more detail what form and function the nature of my own future intervention might take. How can I engage with these places in ways that might evoke other possible imaginings?

Coming Up Against the Boundary

The physical barriers surrounding many of these disused places act as a deterrent to anyone who might be curious enough to want to broach the perimeter. Fencing, barbed wire, locks and gates place these relics out of bounds to the public. For me, as an emerging performer-researcher, I must admit that my curiosity sometimes got the better of me. Little did I know when I began this research just how much work would be involved in terms of contacting various councils, local organisations and private owners, who were the stewards of these places, in order to be granted access that would take me beyond the fence. I reflected on the dilemma of wanting to get past

looking as well as the problem of unauthorised access and the ethics of trespassing especially as a doctoral candidate at a local university. I realised that I was in a particular position that called for acting responsibly and that there could be consequences if I did not.¹³² Therefore, I had to take the proper route of requesting permission, meeting the people who managed these places, and engaging in processes of consultation, conversation and persistence.¹³³ In this way my focus also began to shift to that of process, rather than a desired outcome, and reflexively engaging with the lived experience being generated whereby relationships, experiences and seeking connections with place came to be important.¹³⁴ This is where I felt meaning and significance came to be most potently felt, resonant.



Fig. 17. Perimeter fencing surrounds the East Perth Power Station¹³⁵

¹³² To understand the theoretical and practical development of the relationship between ethics and theatre, see Nicholas Ridout.

¹³³ When I first began this process it was not immediately apparent who owned some of the places I was interested in using for performance research. As not all sites were government owned I consulted with the Department of Land Administration to find out who the current owners of these places were. This was a lengthy process.

¹³⁴ Being situated in relation to one's research in this way is not necessarily easy as it entails shifting the emphasis from closure, arrival, certainty, outcome to that of an open-ended, process-oriented approach.

¹³⁵ The use of physical barriers lock up the place and act to prohibit any kind of physical interaction, although this is not enough to deter graffiti and vandalism. The barrier can also elicit other kinds of behaviour and responses.

While there were many places loaded with histories that captured my imagination, (including the East Perth Power Station), I needed to select one that would/could act as a heuristic for my research/practice (for the performance). I researched places, sought out places and submitted proposals requesting permission to make use of particular historic places (used or unused) with links to the industrial past. However the ongoing challenge for me throughout this next stage of the research process was my inability to gain access to any such place for my performance work. What I was continually coming up against were boundaries/limits enforced by the organizations and stewards that manage and/or claim ownership of these places, many of whom were resolute in terms of restricting or denying access and there were many conversations which ensued regarding issues concerning my proposed use. The characteristics of contemporary performance according to Lois Keidan “acknowledge ways of working that do not sit easily within received structures and strictures” including “art that invests in ideas of process, presence and experience as much as the production of objects and things”. Furthermore, it involves an understanding of “art that is immediate and real; and art that wants to test the limits of the possible and the permissible” (9). Throughout 2001-2003 I was continually rattling the gates of the permissible in a bid to make use of many historic places, approaching various councils, government agencies and private organisations. However, I was not granted access to work inside any places with a sense of history. While I was able to imagine an engagement with any one of these places, opening them up to the public realm was at odds with the ways in which they were currently being imagined as well as any future planning agendas. My physical and imaginative intentions could not be accommodated (more on this later). This ongoing negotiation with places occurred during a time of intense change both for me personally and in the broader political sphere.

No Place: out of place, out of time

I moved out of home for the first time at the beginning of 2002, in the aftermath of September 9/11.¹³⁶ Place, especially a home-place, took on a new resonance for me during this time. I felt unanchored from family and was faced with attempting to make art, devise a performance where place was a central component, in what felt to me to be an unpredictable world.¹³⁷ I questioned the relevance and usefulness of what I was doing. Prior to moving out of home, and before September 2001 I felt the necessity of attempting to inhabit places that appeared unused and fenced off from public space as a creative and critical act. The sense of uprooting I experienced in leaving home and the 'global' condition of uncertainty and terror that followed as the dust settled around what had been the World Trade Center, intensified and personalised, in ways that I could not foresee, both the nature and scope of my search for a place where I could situate my performance work. My awareness of time, place, space and scale were continually shifting at this historical juncture as what was happening elsewhere rapidly became a global predicament with far-reaching significance affecting all levels of place and culture. I continued to look for a place that could be mobilized for my performance research and a place where I could live during this traumatic happening. The broader politics of this time became part of the process and journey towards making performance/art with a focus on illuminating encounters within specific locations. Attempting to implace was a complex issue at a time of rupture and its aftermath of political responses geared towards arousing emotions of fear and paranoia. I was also now beginning to see derelict and crumbling sites of previous eras in a strange light, my seeing refracted through a shattered lens of terror and trauma.¹³⁸ There was a critical urgency that compelled me to persevere in locating a place with a sense of history. However, the process of

¹³⁶ I can clearly recall witnessing at home the televised reportage of 9/11 as it was happening. I was holding an empty cardboard box in my hands as I was in the process of packing up some of my belongings in preparation for my move.

¹³⁷ In chronicling the event of 9/11 and its aftermath, there have been numerous social, political and cultural commentaries written on the subject of artistic response and the question or relevance of how to continue to make work in light of this terrible event. This raises the issue of art, its uses, intentions, capabilities and power. For a discussion of art-making in the context of 9/11, see T. Smith. A range of artworks, plays, dance performances and theatrical events emerged in response to the events of 9/11 and its repercussions. Some examples include "The Bomb", a play by International WOW Company (2002); "The Guys", a play by Anne Nelson (2002); "The Mercy Seat", a play by Neil LaBute (2002); "The Table of Silence Project", choreographed by Jacquelyn Buglisi (September 2011).

¹³⁸ However, I also held onto a feeling of hope during this time. Whatever I was feeling during this time was being worked through in the process of research, and active doing.

being granted permission to work inside such a place became impossible in the context of the post-9/11 climate. I was repeatedly denied access to numerous places by councils, managers and authorities on the grounds of occupational health and safety issues, security issues, insurance, as well as perceptions of inappropriateness in terms of how I was proposing to make use of place/s. I was faced with questioning the limits of what was actually possible at this time and in this place; sub/urban Perth.

During this time the experience of displacement in my personal life and as an emerging performer-researcher led to a doubled consciousness of place. Where there had previously been a gap between art and life I was now experiencing an increasing slippage between them. With no place that I could call my own, either personally or artistically, the nature of my quest for locating a place intensified. While the divisions in ethnographic research problematize the neat divisions between places of research and places of living, what I was experiencing now two-fold were issues of security, location, emplacement and geographical reach. I was broaching my own limits in terms of what I was going to do and what I was able to do as an artist. Place was continually and temptingly out of reach. However, I continued to believe that 'securing' a place for my research was possible and so I pursued place after place after place. If I were to chart a map of the places I researched and travelled to it would read like a crazy itinerary. Movement became reflex during this time.

In addition further complexities were brought to bear on this process of place-searching and place-negotiation. In the months after 9/11 I felt increasingly uneasy while undertaking research of industrial heritages and other heritage places. With surveillance and security protocols implemented to target suspicious behaviour, especially in public places, being seen to be doing something out of the norm or even noticed/seen to be loitering around particular places could be considered a national security risk. The act of photographing places could also be misconstrued as intentionally malicious. My research activities and actions during this time entailed asking questions about places, seeking permission, as well as negotiating with certain authorities who managed these places. With many of these places already off-limits to the public I felt that even the act of looking at them, standing in front of them or walking around the perimeters was circumspect activity let alone seeking permission

to work inside them. My awareness of the hyper-vigilance, heightened-emotions and tightening of security within the culture did affect the nature of my research (and progression). I felt, at times, that my wondering/wandering was suspect and I was often extremely self-conscious when taking photographs of many of the places I visited as part of my research for a place.¹³⁹



Fig. 18. The Maylands Brickworks

Relocating

Undertaking this process of research during a time of personal and political uncertainty entailed negotiating new experiences. While this was at times exhilarating, it was also exhausting and unnerving. Moving out of home entailed coming to know a different home-place to where I had previously lived. I felt adrift in the unknown. I began to take regular walks around the neighbourhood where I had relocated to, as part of the process of ‘getting back into place’ (Casey, *Getting*). As I did not have the familiarity of accumulated local knowledge, encountering the surrounding terrain on foot enabled me to get my bearings and begin to make sense of where I was now situated. I soon came to realise that I had moved to a locality

¹³⁹ Although I did not visually document many of the places I saw or visited in the form of photographs I did write about them in my field notes.

where there was an emphasis on heritage/history within the built and natural landscape.¹⁴⁰ The Maylands Brickworks (see Fig. 16) is one of the local sites/sights in this area. My first encounter with this industrial relic had a powerful affect on me. I experienced a physical jolt to my senses that triggered a range of different sensations and emotional responses. This included feeling a sense of awe as the materiality of the building exudes a strong material presence. I had stumbled across this relic quite by accident so it came as a surprise walking through the surrounding residential and recreational contexts to encounter a building that evoked another time and place entirely. The surrounding contexts rendered a strangely incongruent sense to the location of this historic site.¹⁴¹ Yet, there was something compelling about the Brickworks that resonated strongly with me.

I wonder if this place would have had such a strong affect on me if I had not encountered it when I did and under the circumstances that I did (a time of major upheaval personally and at a point of crisis within the broader cultural landscape). While I am much more critical of my responses since the initial moment of my encounter with this place, the experience had a profound affect on me both emotionally and physically. The tangible aura of this place reverberated through me in an embodied sense becoming a catalyst for me to begin a personal journey to find my place as an artist and to consider the sites of my belonging. Rather than attempt to further explicate or find an over-arching representative meaning for the phenomenological experience of this encounter it is important to consider the difficulty at times in putting into words particular experiences that exceed language.

Correspondence: place-negotiation

The affective dimensions of my encounter with the Maylands Brickworks led me to contact the Bayswater City Council to seek permission to make use of this place for my research/performance.¹⁴² I was advised to put my proposal in writing and address

¹⁴⁰ I am referring here to the suburb of Maylands.

¹⁴¹ In a recreational setting with nearby artificial lakes and parkland the Maylands Brickworks is estranged from its original industrial context as it stands juxtaposed to residential housing, as well as recreational and leisure facilities.

¹⁴² I spoke with several administrators from the council who specialised in matters concerning building and infrastructure as well as recreational services/areas. I made an appointment with one of

it to the City Council CEO.¹⁴³ I received several letters in reply. The first one informed me that the safety of the building would be investigated and that the council would contact me concerning this issue. The second letter outlined several other heritage places for my consideration including the Peninsula Cultural and Community Centre, emphasizing that the City of Bayswater was aiming to “increase use and appreciation of this facility.” The third letter informed me that the submission of my request to utilise the Brickworks would be tabled for the Council’s next meeting and that if my request was approved public liability insurance from the university would need to cover any work that I did on site and that I would need to forward a letter that would indemnify the city council against any incident, should it occur, as the result of using the facility. The conditions also stipulated that should my application be successful, entering the site and building was at my own risk.¹⁴⁴ However the fourth and final letter I received stated that due to “[t]he structural integrity of the Brick Kilns Structure ... it is unsuitable for use for an extended period of time” and that “[a]ny use of the Brickworks Facility must be limited to the grounds surrounding the kiln structure.” Furthermore, an “alternative venue”, that of the Peninsula Cultural and Community Centre, was suggested in terms of being “more suitable” (appropriate) for my project (City of Bayswater).¹⁴⁵

the project officer’s who was willing to show me around inside the building as well as the external structures. The meeting at the Brickworks was brief. The only use of the internal spaces was as a storage facility for old props and equipment used as part of the Festival of Fire, a community initiative in which the Brickworks was used as the backdrop to the spectacle and display of community performers.

¹⁴³ During my initial conversations with the council I was informed that the Brickworks had been utilised on two occasions as the background setting for a community festival. This prior use of the Brickworks suggested to me that being granted access to this place would be possible. I had several conversations with the council which involved communicating briefly my creative intentions: to inhabit the place for a period of time as the creative development for the work that I proposed would eventually lead to a performance. It was also one of my aims to involve the participation of the local community, residents and people connected to the history of the Brickworks as part of the research and performance.

¹⁴⁴ The submission of my proposal and its subsequent consideration took time due to the schedule of council meetings. There was no guarantee that my proposal would be given approval. With this in mind I continued to seek out other places, while still following up with the processing of my application by the Bayswater City Council administration.

¹⁴⁵ The Peninsula Cultural Community Centre is a heritage building with large interior spaces and rooms which the council hires out to local businesses and community groups who use the centre for work-related purposes and as a meeting place. Making use of the place for a performance would involve being restricted to particular areas of the building as well as paying hire costs to the council. The council would benefit financially from my use of this particular place. While I understand that using places for performance making frequently involves economic considerations, the hire costs for this particular place were not amenable to my budget. More importantly, I wanted to make use of a place that had not been used previously in a creative context and which an audience had not been inside of before.

Although I re-clarified the aims of my proposal to the city council's administration and stating the reasons underpinning why it was integral to my performance work that I inhabit/work inside the building they raised issues and concerns regarding occupational safety and health, insurance risks, and security. The threat, real or otherwise, that a performance inside the structure posed confirmed for me that working inside this building for an extended period of time was an issue as well as the nature of the work. I explained to the council that the kind of performance work I had proposed in relation to the Maylands Brickworks entailed an ethos sensitive to the internal structures of the building. The ongoing conversations and negotiation between myself and the council in relation to the use of this place, which continued over a period of 12 months, made me realise that I was coming face to face with part of the reality of attempting to locate a performance work inside a heritage building.¹⁴⁶

The council's response to my proposed use of the Maylands Brickworks led me to reflect on the language and discourses used in relation to heritage and place. While it would certainly be easy for me to simply write off the process above as "bureaucratic red tape", the language I encountered during the negotiation with this place (and many other places) articulated particular ideas about heritage, and especially the notion of heritage as a site (rather than place). 'Site' conveys a sense of a discrete point in space, separated from its surrounding context. A site reflects a visual relation to physical location. 'Heritage' and 'site', together, communicate an identifiable place (a fixed location in the landscape) where history can be seen, visibly, to have left its mark. The term 'site' has led to increasing concern in relation to its semantic use and associative meaning in knowledge-practices of heritage. This concern is reflected in critiques of the term 'site', in relation to heritage, and how this can produce limited understandings and representations of the kinds of relationships with place within a broader cultural landscape.¹⁴⁷ However, as Burns and Kahn write, "[s]ite resonates on multiple registers and its multi-valence yields varied outcomes"

¹⁴⁶ This is important to note as not all places are available for creative use. The council's response led me to consider other options in relation to my use of this particular place. While I felt there was some scope to continue to negotiate the conditions of my proposal the fact remained that I felt the conditions stipulated were in effect a constraining mechanism to the meanings that could possibly be explored by the work I was attempting to do. I felt uneasy with this degree of conservatism as I felt it would come to define the nature of the work as well as the form of the intended performance.

¹⁴⁷ For further reading of this perspective, see Maria Cotter, William E. Boyd, and Jane Gardiner.

(xiii). The Brickworks, is fenced off from the surrounding social contexts (residential housing, playground and leisure facilities, nearby car park and golf course) which sets it aside within a frame that works to visually enhance the formal and physical properties of the building. This approach suggests a kind of thinking about heritage as site/sight for visual consumption. The current use of the Brickworks as a local spectacle on view for passing glimpses (pathways built around the Brickworks are designed for walkers and cyclists but there are also the inclusion of signs that prohibit loitering) reinforces the perception of heritage as an object, a material cultural, social and historical commodity that is only of value while its material nature is able to be protected and preserved.

It was this kind of thinking and place perception that I believed could be worked with and through on a practical level by opening up the Brickworks to a new kind of experience through physical interaction (inhabiting place) made possible in a performance. My proposed use of the Brickworks raised issues for the council which connected to concerns for the materiality of the building and its fragile condition (even with recent structural repairs). This emphasized the value of the materiality in relation to the meaning of heritage places and what heritage means, in terms of how it is represented on municipal inventories by local councils of government.¹⁴⁸

My negotiation with The Bayswater City Council over the use of The Maylands Brickworks was just one example of many similar experiences with the managers and stewards of historic/heritage places which I have characterised as being linked to the industrial past.¹⁴⁹ The nature of my proposed use of these places, while eliciting a range of responses from managers, stewards and/or custodians of these places, continually raised concern for the way I intended to engage with place (through embodied modes of performance). This kind of interaction posed a risk to the real and representational sense of heritage (as something which must be protected, fixed and not touched) which they thought could alter it.¹⁵⁰ The ongoing resistance and

¹⁴⁸ For more information on the relationship between municipal councils and heritage, see Roy Jones and Brian J Shaw.

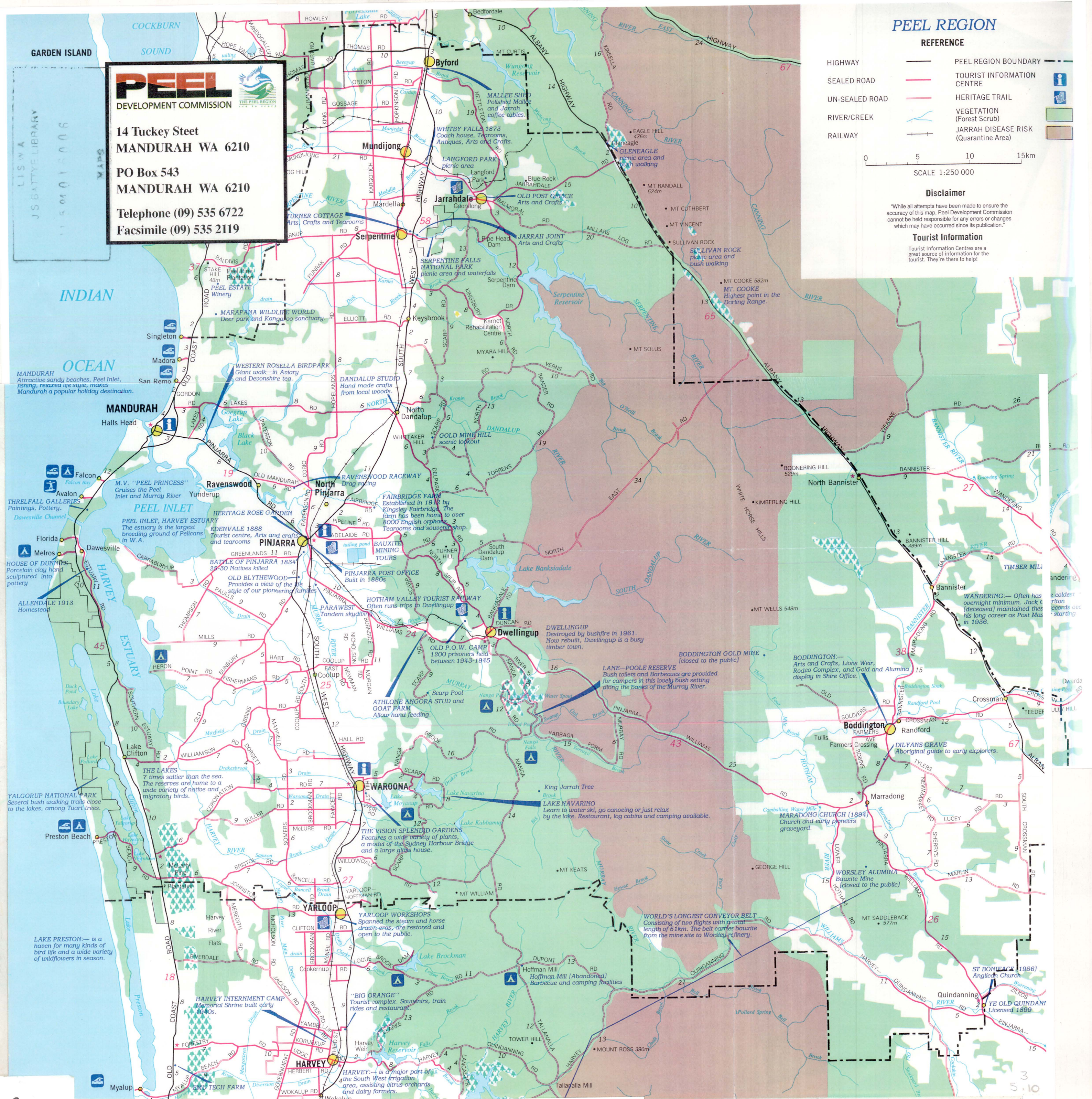
¹⁴⁹ For discussions on the issue of conflict in relation to heritage, see J. E. Tunbridge and G. J. Ashworth.

¹⁵⁰ Practices and acts that engage with H/heritage through preservation and conservation are a way of bestowing a sense of authenticity to reinforce and uphold the value of surviving relics, artefacts and

final decision of the council claimed the self-evident nature of the building's valuable and fragile materiality as their primary consideration. This reinforced for me the necessity for further intervention, and to find other ways in which I could continue to pursue the question of the uses of these places in light of opening them to other possible imaginings to advance an altogether different notion of heritage places.

The difficulties I experienced as discussed above reflect broader issues in relation to place in terms of the way that discourses work in making sense of place, heritage, and their uses. As a consequence of these ongoing negotiations with heritage places in sub/urban Perth I began to explore heritage beyond the metropolitan area in which I lived. In the following sections of this chapter I discuss where my research-led-practice took me and the ways that I began to examine some of the ideas evoked by the landscape I encountered. The critical thinking that accompanies this case study analysis further engages with the conceptual terrain of heritage, place, performance and memory as these became key areas to be worked through in both theory and practice.

sites connected with the past. Interpretation is part of the process of transforming the past into heritage.



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REFERENCE

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|----------------|---|---------------------------------------|-----|
| HIGHWAY | — | PEEL REGION BOUNDARY | --- |
| SEALED ROAD | — | TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE | i |
| UN-SEALED ROAD | — | HERITAGE TRAIL | — |
| RIVER/CREEK | — | VEGETATION (Forest Scrub) | — |
| RAILWAY | — | JARRAH DISEASE RISK (Quarantine Area) | — |

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Disclaimer

"While all attempts have been made to ensure the accuracy of this map, Peel Development Commission cannot be held responsible for any errors or changes which may have occurred since its publication."

Tourist Information

Tourist Information Centres are a great source of information for the tourist. They're there to help!

Fig. 19. Map of the Peel Region, Western Australia

Elsewhere: Exploring Down Yunderup

The Peel region of Western Australia is geographically linked to a regional network of places that heritage and tourism agencies promote and present to the public as providing a plethora of recreational and leisure activities as well as enriching local experiences. This region, and the experiences it offers, is marketed toward those who live elsewhere.¹⁵¹ To travel to this region from Perth is to head ‘down south’, a direction and destination well known within the local vernacular as code for relaxation and leisure.¹⁵² Although the Peel region is located in close proximity to the metropolitan area of Perth, it is also distant enough from ‘home’ (approximately 80 kilometres away) to provide a weekend or holiday retreat for people who live in the city and surrounding suburbs.¹⁵³ Regional localities operate within the heritage and tourism industries as places to visit, explore and experience by foregrounding significant sites, places, locally-based products and recreational activities as a way of making these places attractive as destinations to locals and to visitors.

The necessity of searching further afield for a place where I could situate my research/practice, was the reason I began exploring a regional area beyond Perth. In 2003 I travelled by car from Perth to the Peel region to be shown a range of heritage places by the heritage advisor from the Heritage Council of Western Australia.¹⁵⁴ The last place on the heritage advisor’s itinerary was Old Cooper’s Mill, a former flour mill situated on an island in the Murray River near Yunderup.¹⁵⁵ This was to

¹⁵¹ The Peel region is one of nine regions within the state of Western Australia and is located along the state’s west coast approximately 80 kilometres south of the state’s capital city, Perth. The image of the region is marketed as a counter response to the metropolitan experience. For a discussion of leisure activities which are understood in relation to particular ‘modern’ ways of experiencing time, space and place, see Rojek, *Ways*.

¹⁵² The idea of ‘south’ is associated with “travelling for pleasure” and conjures ideas of “accommodating climate, pleasure and repose” in contradistinction to the idea of ‘north’ which conveys “thoughts of a harder place, a place of dearth: uplands, adverse weather, remoteness from cities”, according to Peter Davidson (9).

¹⁵³ One of the issues concerning place that continues to be a contested site within political, social and cultural debates, especially in Australia, is the sub/urban sprawl which is considered to be bridging the gap between notions of city and rural/regional areas of Australia. The notion of sub/urban sprawl suggests an insidious form of encroachment of the sub/urban into the rural/regional areas of country.

¹⁵⁴ The Heritage Council of Western Australia acts as the state’s advisory body on all matters related to heritage. The ethos of the council is to provide for and encourage conservation in relation to places that have cultural heritage significance to Western Australia. The Heritage Advisor who assisted me in my research endeavours on heritage places was based at the Pinjarra Visitor Centre and was responsible for advising on heritage places within the Peel region.

¹⁵⁵ Yunderup is a town site located between Mandurah and Pinjarra.

become the place I selected for my research/practice.¹⁵⁶ Cooper's Mill and its location became a stimulus for many questions, thoughts and ideas which focalised around heritage and history, identity, place, memory and performance. The discussion of heritage places provides a perspective into the kinds of critical and creative research that explorations of heritage (and heritage places) engender within performance. Researching the history of the mill is one aspect of my performance research and a critical site for considering forms of knowledge production in shaping the heritage experience.¹⁵⁷

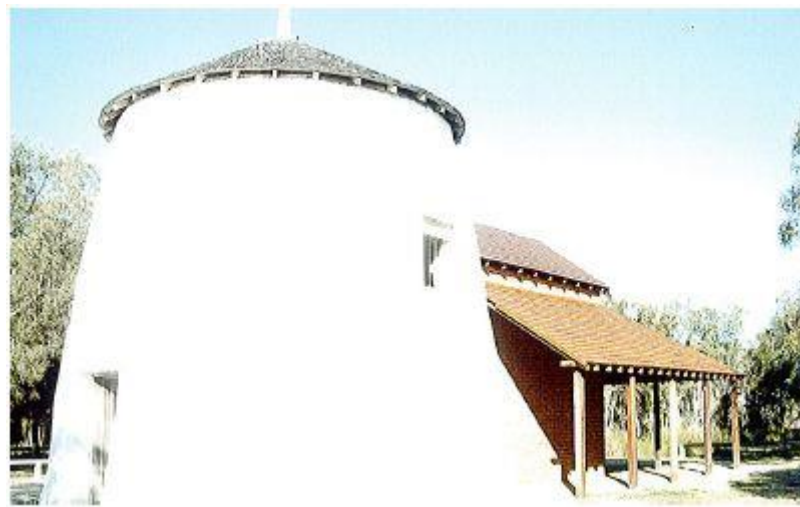


Fig. 20. Cooper's Mill, 2005

¹⁵⁶ I discuss the process of finding Cooper's Mill and the kinds of research/practice that I engaged with in relation to the mill in Chapter 6.

¹⁵⁷ The historical information that follows is to provide background context for the reader. I did not find all of the historical information about Cooper's Mill from one source. It took time to locate and obtain access to information, documents, photographs and other historical traces of the mill. The information that I include here in this chapter is drawn from some of the materials that I gathered while researching the documented history of the mill. The process of undertaking research involved requesting historical evidence from archival documentation as well as reading and attempting to interpret (make sense of) documents and materials pertaining to the mill and the island. Engaging with archives as part of my research into Cooper's Mill was useful for finding answers to particular questions. Many documents referred to other sources for further information which suggested if 'looking' further was worthwhile. Although I was not consciously aware of following any particular method or theory in undertaking the process of researching the history of the mill, I was interested in finding gaps in the officially documented history of the mill. The process of researching the mill became a way of finding out about how archival evidence is recorded, what is written and how it is written, as well as the kinds of information that are considered important in constructing an official record of places with historic/heritage significance. For an insightful discussion of archival research and its creative possibilities for generating theory see Mary Lindemann.

Cooper's Mill: A Documented History

Cooper's Mill is named after Joseph Cooper, one of the earliest settlers in the Murray district, who began building the mill in 1843.¹⁵⁸ Cooper's Mill is a place vested by heritage agencies with cultural heritage significance at both local and state levels.¹⁵⁹ The mill is recognised as one of Western Australia's early flour mills, and is believed to be one of the first flour mills built for public use within the Murray district.¹⁶⁰ As the Murray district was selected to become the second colony for settlement in Western Australia (1830), the role of the mill within this locality was important as the milling of wheat contributed to the survival and livelihood of the early pioneers living in the region and surrounding areas.¹⁶¹ Flour milling in Western Australia was an industry that was vital to "industrial development in this State, [as] it provided a framework for settlement, agriculture, transport and technological change." Not only this but, "[t]he significant contribution of milling to our industrial past is directly linked to the economic, social and cultural fabric of Western Australia" (Lang xv). Colonisation and the emergence of a pastoral Australia led to a changing regional landscape as the development of industry and infrastructure changed the look of this country.¹⁶² While some of the histories (and the labour involved by settlers, convicts and migrants) can be traced through remaining features such as buildings and industrial relics many have not survived the ravages of time.¹⁶³ Many flour mills met

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Cooper arrived in Western Australia in 1830. He selected land within the Murray district under the proposed scheme by Thomas Peel. However he chose to reside with his family in Fremantle due to 'difficulties' with the Murray aborigines during the 1830s which made 'progress' slow for early settlers in this region. Cooper did not locate to the region until this 'problem' with the Murray aborigines was resolved, conflict which is documented as The Battle (or massacre) of Pinjarra. Joseph Cooper Snr began building the mill in 1843 with the help of two of his sons, Thomas and Joseph Jnr as well as a local miller named Josiah Stinton. After Joseph Cooper Senior's tragic death in 1847 the building of the mill was resumed by his eldest son Joseph Cooper, Stinton and Dan Myerick and was completed in 1847. The mill was in operation by 1850.

¹⁵⁹ Cooper's Mill was entered into the Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission on 1 September 1984. The mill was listed in the Peel Region Municipal Heritage Inventory in 1995. The mill was recognised as a place of cultural heritage significance and listed by the National Trust of Western Australia in 1996. The mill was given a permanent listing on the State Register of Heritage Places in 1997. It remains vested in the Shire of Murray, a local government agency (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 30).

¹⁶⁰ According to the local authority of the National Trust of Australia (W.A.) the Murray region had eighteen flour mills in operation which were constructed from the 1840s to the 1870s. John Bussell is attributed with the first flour mill constructed in 1839 on his property located in the Busselton district. There are no remains of this early mill (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 69). For more information regarding the early flour mills in Western Australia refer to Ernie Lang.

¹⁶¹ For an in depth history of the Murray district, see Ronald Richards' *Murray District*; and *Murray and Mandurah*.

¹⁶² For more information on this subject, see Michael Pearson and Jane Lennon.

¹⁶³ Cooper's Mill is one of only several flour mills within this locality that still remains today.

their demise “through the vicissitudes of ever-changing economic circumstances”, with the fate of others also attributed to floods, fire and natural erosion as well as human erasure (Lang vi). Cooper’s Mill stands today as a surviving relic from the past with a history that connects it to the beginnings of early white settlement in Western Australia, remaining in existence amidst the changes and development of successive phases of agricultural and industrial development and their evolution up until the present day. I was intrigued as to why or how this particular place still remains while other visions from colonial history have disappeared from view within this regional landscape.¹⁶⁴

The physical survival of the mill today is due to acts aimed at restoration and preservation rather than the enduring strength of its materiality.¹⁶⁵ The mill operated as a flour mill from 1850 until 1865, with the mill converted to steam power in the mid-1850s.¹⁶⁶ However a number of factors led to the demise of the mill’s operations, including heavy flooding throughout the entire south-west region in 1862, the development of roads and bridges which diverted traffic away from the area, as well as the production of wheat grown elsewhere at a more competitive price.¹⁶⁷ The mill closed down in 1865 and the mill’s steam engine was sold off and installed at Captain Theodore Fawcett’s flour mill in Pinjarra.¹⁶⁸ Following the closure of the mill, the Cooper family no longer resided at the island and with their departure the mill and houses were left abandoned.¹⁶⁹ The Coopers leased the land allocated to them on the island as a stock run for cattle, but in the 1880s they no longer continued with this practise due to the use of land elsewhere. The mill was reported to be in fair condition in the 1890s, although some accounts also suggest that there were signs of deterioration. Consequently, as the mill had been vacant for a

¹⁶⁴ I emphasize here that the mill is a relic from colonial history. It may not have been built at all if the ‘problem’ with the Murray aborigines had not been quelled by Peel and the white settlers. I refer here to the Battle/Massacre of Pinjarra.

¹⁶⁵ For a discussion about the ideas of preservation, conservation and restoration see Angela Phelps, G.J Ashworth, and Bengt O.H. Johansson (3-10).

¹⁶⁶ The wooden sails are believed to have been destroyed in a fire, and with the addition of the steam engine a brick boiler room was extended on to adjoin the eastern side of the limestone structure of the mill.

¹⁶⁷ For more information about the history and the development of industry in the Murray district that spans 1829 through to the 1990s see *Murray District*; and *Murray and Mandurah*, both by Richards.

¹⁶⁸ Fawcett’s mill was built in 1865.

¹⁶⁹ The Coopers built two dwellings, one of wattle and daub, a common method for building construction at the time, and one of stone, both near the mill in a location facing south towards the main channel of the river. See *Murray and Mandurah*, by Richards (174).

number of years, locals began to ‘claim’ the bricks and stones from the mill and engine room, pillaging these materials for building their own homes. The two houses on the island used previously as residences by the Coopers did not survive due to local pillaging. Sections of the mill were further damaged and destroyed through the carelessness of fires lit by visitors. It seemed almost inevitable that Cooper’s Mill would disappear.¹⁷⁰

By the turn of the twentieth-century the mill was being used as a smoke house for curing fish. Fisheries Inspectors had been policing the rivers and waterways in the area since 1889 when the Fisheries Act was first introduced. In 1909 a fisheries inspector was stationed at the mill as “[t]his made policing of the closed waters much more effective” (Richards, *Mandurah* 170). It is believed (although the written record is unable to confirm for certain) that this service continued up until the First World War. In the years following the First World War the mill, still in a state of neglect and disrepair, became the home of a Russian recluse who stayed there until the late 1920s. It was at this time that plans were put forward by the Cooper family to hand over the mill and the land (Location 56) that they owned on the island to the Murray Roads Board as repairs to the Old Mill were proving to be a burden and attempts at selling the land had been unsuccessful (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 21).

1929 marked the centenary of white settlement in Western Australia and as part of the centennial celebrations the community in the Murray district supported the

¹⁷⁰ The historical record of the mill and the island intersect with other regional influences and events at the turn of the century. The growing tourism and fishing industries throughout the Murray district drew considerable interest from local politicians and businessmen. Plans were put forward to promote the group of islands in the Murray River and other areas throughout the Murray district as prime areas for tourism and small scale industries. Building a hotel on Cooleenup Island formed part of these plans as it was considered to be a way to capitalise on the growth and development of tourism throughout the region. Although the hotel was never built local interest in the mill/island as a place for recreation and leisure activities (swimming, fishing, boating, picnicking) led to its frequent use as a stopping off point for locals and visitors who travelled the waterways throughout the Murray district. Yunderup was officially declared a townsite in 1898 and Cooleenup Island was originally selected to be the centre of the town (although settlement throughout the area occurred predominantly at South Yunderup which forms the mainland). The mill, situated on the promontory of the island, continued to function as a local landmark useful as an orienteering device for those navigating the rivers and channels of the estuary. Its presence as a strong visual marker in the river landscape also served as a local landmark and a meeting place for the local community. The rise and decline of industries, economic conditions and population levels throughout the region impacted on the mill which is reflected in the periods of use, non-use and abuse. For more information see Richards, *Mandurah*; and Considine, Griffiths and Burgess.

proposal for the Murray Roads Board to be vested with the responsibility of Cooper's Mill.¹⁷¹ This meant taking action to restore the mill, a matter of some urgency, due to the complete removal of the bricks from the boiler room by locals as construction materials for building their own homes. Cooper's Mill and Location 56 were officially handed over to the Murray Roads Board in 1930, on the condition stipulated by the Cooper family that the roads board were to "keep the mill in good order and that it be preserved for all time" (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 21). Some restoration work to the roof and timber supports of the mill were undertaken in 1930 by Reg Cooper, a descendant of the Cooper family, with funds from the Royal Western Australian Historical Society.¹⁷² This work was recognized by placing a commemorative plaque above the door on the outside of the mill (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 21). However, even with these repairs the mill continued to deteriorate due to erosion, flooding, the ongoing pilfering of building materials and vandalism.¹⁷³ When a bushfire swept over the island in 1942 this destroyed the restoration work carried out on the mill in 1930 (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 24). In 1947 the roads board put forward proposals to the Lands Department to made use of the land (Locations 18 and 56) on Cooleenup Island for the purpose of recreation and camping. Endorsed in a letter to the department by Reg Cooper who explained that this use of the mill and surrounding lands had also been desired by his Grandfather, James Cooper Snr, Locations 18 and 56 were resumed and officially declared public utilities for recreation and camping, and vested in the roads board in 1949 (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 25-26). In 1949 the roads board called for volunteers to be stationed at the mill to act as wardens to protect the building from further vandalism (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 26).

¹⁷¹ To this end, the Murray Progress Association had already written to the Under Secretary for Lands in 1928 in the hope of receiving some form of assistance for preserving the mill, "which was recognised in the local community as an important '...relic of early pioneering settlement'" (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 21).

¹⁷² There is some documentary evidence that repairs to the mill were procured due to centenary celebrations in the region. The commemoration of the region and its survival through hard years of labour was to encompass iconic local places as part of this celebration and this included old Cooper's Mill. See also Richards, *Mandurah*.

¹⁷³ This included acts of vandalism to the commemorative plaque which people used as a target for rifle practice. Subsequently it was removed from the mill for safekeeping and reattached when the mill was restored in 1984.



Fig. 21. Photograph of Cooper's Mill from the 1940s which shows it boarded up¹⁷⁴

Responsibility for the mill had been granted to the Murray Roads Board in 1930 at the request of the Cooper family on the condition that the building was to be “conserved for the enjoyment of future generations” (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 21). However, there was minimal conservation work undertaken by the roads board and this lack of care in relation to the mill became an ongoing issue. The fragile state of the mill, particularly throughout the 1950s was the subject of considerable correspondence between the Cooper family and the roads board. Eventually some steps were taken to remedy the situation with some remedial work undertaken in 1951 funded by Reg Cooper and the roads board. However, further damage, neglect and vandalism of the mill continued. This led to Reg Cooper’s “animated” letter to the roads board in 1959 (Considine and Griffiths 29). There is little documentation of what restoration work was actually undertaken at the mill after 1959. It was not until 1984 that large-scale reconstruction work was undertaken which involved rebuilding the engine room and re-roofing the mill (Considine,

¹⁷⁴ The condition of the mill was cause for concern as the derelict building was considered to be a danger to those who visited the site, as evidenced by the public safety notice written by the Murray Roads Board in the photograph that issues the warning – “Any person entering the building do so at their own risk” (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 24-25).

Griffiths and Burgess 27-29). Rendering to the exterior surfaces of the mill is evidence of what was done under the aegis of preservation, with criticism in response to the methods used as not being authentic to the original construction (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 28). In 1986 the Shire of Murray (formerly the Murray Roads Board) built a caretaker's residence on the island situated in close proximity to the mill to ensure the maintenance of the grounds and as a protective measure against further acts of vandalism against the mill (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 30). In 1994 the use of the mill and the surrounding land for 'recreation and camping' uses was reclassified to 'recreation and preservation of historic buildings' (Considine, Griffiths and Burgess 30). In 2001-2, funds provided through a Lotterywest Grant Allocation enabled the roof of the mill to be reconstructed in keeping with, what is believed to have been the original design (Considine and Griffiths).

Heritage, Places and their Pasts

Heritage is notoriously difficult to define yet David Lowenthal's idea that heritage is about "[t]hings worth saving" continues to carry considerable discursive weight (*Environmental* 555).¹⁷⁵ These words raise questions as to what those 'things' are that come to be valued as 'worth saving' (as well as how and why). The term 'worth' is inflected with socio-cultural, aesthetic, scientific and economic dimensions, and are important in decisions involving which things are saved, for whom, by whom, and for what purpose/s. Jones and Shaw make the point that "[w]hile we may wish to save things from the past for the future, it is the opinions, decisions and actions of people in the present that bring about their salvation and preservation or, indeed, their obliteration" (1). Preserving the past for the future tends to obscure the fact that heritage functions according to "the present needs of the people" (Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2). This reflects my engagement with the mill. It is therefore important to examine who the people in question are and what these needs might be. This is an area where heritage and the meanings people associate with it can be widely divergent and where dissonance and conflict can also occur.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ For further discussion of heritage, see Robert Hewison; R. G. Collingwood and Raphael Samuel

¹⁷⁶ Adding further complexity to the dimensions of heritage, Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge, acknowledge that the nature of today's Western societies which they characterise "as becoming more self-consciously socially and culturally diverse" also play a critical role in how heritage is defined.

Places and their historical pasts are of particular value to heritage and tourism industries. In these industries it is the past, or a place's historicity that are often used in particular ways to evoke a sense of time and place. This use of the past is a selective process with the purpose of identifying those aspects of a place helpful for creating links between past and present often to aid a feeling of continuity between then and now. In their discussion of the relationship between the past, history and heritage Tunbridge and Ashworth develop the idea that "[t]he present selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future" (6). Place production in this sense involves imagination, interpretation and selection to determine which past is to be chosen in the present for the future. Although this is not always a consciously selective process it is the kinds of choices made and the uses of the past in heritage and tourism that shape "what contemporary society chooses to inherit and to pass on" (Tunbridge and Ashworth 6). How a place once was often relies on notions of authenticity by recourse to surviving objects, artefacts or sites (Tunbridge and Ashworth 18-19). It is through this kind of approach that place identities are attributed to place/s (Lowenthal, *Past* 41-46). While this particular approach informs the relationship between the past and place/s in the heritage model discussed by Tunbridge and Ashworth, this use of the past can have particular consequences for how place/s are defined and come to function within heritage production.¹⁷⁷ A key attribute of heritage, as defined by Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge, is the contemporary ways it is used in "identifications with representations of space and place" (1). Heritage creation and management utilises 'the past' in shaping "senses of belonging defined and transmitted through representations of place" (Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 1). Transforming the past into heritage endows particular histories of places to act as

They conceptualise heritage "[i]n this present context ... as the use of the past as a cultural, political and economic resource for the present" and relate this to "the very selective ways in which material artefacts, mythologies, memories and traditions become resources for the present" (2-3). The authors make the point that "heritage does not involve a direct engagement with the study of the past", but rather "the contents, interpretations and representations of the heritage resource are selected according to the demands of the present and, in turn, bequeathed to an imagined future." Heritage, while being "present-centred ... created, shaped and managed by, and in response to, the demands of the present", is also "open to constant revision and change" (3).

¹⁷⁷ Time and place are the means by which heritage and tourism converge, a collaboration that involves "heritage converting locations into destinations and tourism making them economically viable as exhibits of themselves. Locations become museums of themselves within a tourism economy." This process has consequences for place/s as "[o]nce sites, buildings, objects, technologies, or ways of life can no longer sustain themselves as they formerly did, they 'survive' – they are made economically viable – as representations of themselves" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 151).

resources for economic, cultural and political uses. There are, however, burdens and benefits involved in this work. Heritage adds to the historical record, but it can also be the case that it erases and silences other accounts and voices from the record.

The desire to preserve and restore the past in the present is a subject of considerable contemporary debate as this approach is considered to fix and freeze rather than allowing for change. This is a point of contention, for as Lowenthal writes, “[m]emory and history both derive and gain emphasis from physical remains. Tangible survivals provide a vivid immediacy that helps to assure us there really was a past.” He adds, however, that “[t]heir continual but differential erosion and demolition skews the record ... their substantial survival conjures up a past more static than could have been the case.” With this in mind, “however depleted by time and use, relics remain essential bridges between then and now” for “[t]hey confirm or deny what we think of it, symbolize or memorialize communal links over time” (Lowenthal, *Past* xxiii).¹⁷⁸ Lowenthal believes that “[p]reservation has deepened our knowledge of the past but dampened creative use of it.” He explains that our connections with the past are becoming leached of substance through preservation which domesticates the past of “its strangeness” (Lowenthal, *Past* xvii).

Estrangement is part and parcel of the effect of heritage production. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, asserts that “[h]eritage is not lost and found, stolen and reclaimed”, rather it is the language of heritage, referring to “conservation, preservation, restoration, reclamation, recovery, re-creation, recuperation, revitalization, and regeneration” that endows heritage with the (mistaken) cultural assumption “that [it] is there prior to its identification, evaluation, conservation, and celebration” (149). How we come to know the past is a challenging and critical site for the production of meaning that leads to questions concerning which pasts are saved, how they are utilised, by whom, and for what purpose/s? It is by asking such questions that it becomes possible to focus on the kinds of responses that those resources connected with the past engender/provoke and to consider what this potentially contributes towards the present.

¹⁷⁸ The emphasis on heritage within Western discourses of heritage as being understood and interpreted in relation to tangible, material relics and artefacts is beginning to change. For more on this, see L. Smith.

Preserving the past-ness of a place through heritage is a way of shaping the meanings and relationships societies have with places. In post-colonial countries such as Australia, the meanings of places to people are open to multiple readings and are also a source of contestation and powerful debate. The places selected for heritage treatment add to the national character of the country so it is important to look at the kinds of places claimed as valuable for this purpose. While Cooper's Mill adds to the "vocabulary of the Australian settler nation" in considering the post-colonial context should this be a source of pride or shame? Are there other kinds of responses? Can settler heritage evoke such feelings/responses when, as Jane Lydon and Tracy Ireland argue, "the preservationist tendency in some ways indicates an *alienation* from the past and its lessons, an inability to incorporate the past into our lives in any meaningful way" (8, original emphasis). They believe that while the origins of preservation are linked to "loss and longing", heritage (and they refer to "one broad strand of Australian heritage acts") works as a form of "taxidermy in reifying the past, detaching it from the original context which gave it meaning, ... rendering it temporally distant from the present." Their criticism of "[t]he heritage process" is that it "objectifies and commodifies culture, as places and objects are classified and assessed as if their cultural values are intrinsic to their fabric", instead of considering that cultural values are "created through the cultural practices which constitute them as meaningful" (Lydon and Ireland 8). Engaging with meaning production and the creation of meaningful experiences linked to cultural practices occurring in heritage place/s raise questions of meaning and value. This is where particular processes of meaning-exchange in relation to heritage production and consumption become revealing in relation to marking out identity claims and cultural values.

Performance and Heritage

Performance has long been recognised as a cultural tool in framing and defining the heritage experience. The use of performance to invoke an experience of immersion (in the past) for those who visit heritage sites has featured in critical analyses of performances that engage with sites and places which embody the idea of the past

through heritage.¹⁷⁹ Part of experiencing heritage sites is the relationship between past and present, (acts of identification) identity formation and the negotiation of particular readings of history. The intersections between heritage, history and performance have drawn considerable academic interest in recent years and this has led to particular areas of research exploring the relationship between audiences and ways of understanding the histories embedded on site or in places of heritage.¹⁸⁰ Baz Kershaw, for example, considers performance to provide an opportunity for “democratizing” heritage sites, “in the sense of opening them up to be seen as embodying many histories, some of them certainly in conflict” (133). Performance engages with the nexus between past and present to invoke particular imaginings and experiences of history which can also go against the grain or powerfully contest dominant histories. In rethinking the role history plays in making sense of the past, historian Greg Denning argues for the equivocation of history as performance, incorporating the ephemeral and affective dimensions of performance as part of a poetics for experiencing the past. He believes, “[w]e know instinctively that this consciousness of things past is, in fact, our present”, with performing history a way for/of ‘Presenting the Past’ (Denning xiv). He writes that,

[t]here is time and space in the word ‘presenting’. Time in the sense that putting something into the present is to make it ‘now’; space in the sense that to present something is to stage it in some way. ‘Presenting the Past’ will always imply bringing past and present together. It will also imply that the past will not be replicated or repeated, but represented, shaped, staged, performed in some way other than it originally existed. (Denning xiv)

Engaging with the presentation of the past (at heritage sites and places) is where the critical efficacy of performance can potentially emerge. Performing history, in ways that address modes of presenting (represent, shape, stage, perform) invokes a poetics that recognises the contiguity between past and present. In the act of making sense of the past the ways that we come to know or understand historical time intersect and

¹⁷⁹ See Kirshenblatt-Gimblett.

¹⁸⁰ See Schechner; Davis; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett; Kershaw; Snow; Pearson and Shanks who examine the nexus between history, heritage, place and performance.

converge with both space and place. History (there and then) cannot be contextualised apart from the present (here and now). Performance produces ways of knowing the past to make sense of the present. Ways of knowing are poetics, “described by their systems of expression, their processes of communication, their relationship to shared experience”, which Denning suggests “can be called among other things objective, metaphoric, romantic” (41). His proviso in describing a poetics for histories (which he considers qualitatively different to that of the past), is recognising the paradox of knowing for “all that has happened is almost indescribable. The moment we give it distinguishable characteristics, we transform it, we know it, we make of it a history” (Denning 41). Performance is a knowledge-practice useful for enhancing and exploring a historically situated consciousness of the past to foster, not only ways of understanding but also ways of relating to/with the past in the present moment.¹⁸¹



Fig. 22. Image of Cooper's Mill, n.d.

¹⁸¹ I recognise that while the work of historians is different to that of artists/creative practitioners, both may make use of a range of performative and interactive elements to make sense of the past.

Dis/Playing the Past

The history on display inside Cooper's Mill foregrounds the origin story of its beginnings as a flour mill, information about the Cooper family as well as technical aspects of how the mill once operated. This account of the mill's past and function is captured on paper in words, photographs and diagrams contained behind glass in display cases which frame the walls of the boiler room. Along the sides of the boiler room walls are rough-hewn wooden cupboards and replicas of tools such as, saws, lamps, horse bridle and other rusted equipment associated with the past. Inside the circular room of the mill (adjacent to the boiler room) one of the original grinding stones is propped against the wall. On the upper sections of the wall inside this room are inscriptions of letters, names and other markings scratched into the limestone of the mill. These elements together contribute towards the experience of the history of the mill. The affect of the display invokes responses (from me) that elicit feelings, thoughts, visceral sensations, imaginative and creative acts that I experience as a way of critically adjusting and responding to the heritage frame.

The contemporary experience of Cooper's Mill, framed by 'heritage' and 'recreation', emphasize reading and seeing the past by way of engaging with a written and visual account of its (colonial) history. That which is put on display is presented as the official history, the authentic claim to the past of this place. The display cases containing photographs of the mill and the Cooper family, written information about the Coopers and the past uses of the mill, as well as technical diagrams, are positioned near one of two entry points to the mill. The dimly lit interior requires a close reading if one is to gather a sense of the past life of this place. The photographic images display portraiture of Joseph Cooper Snr, members of his immediate family and images of the mill from the late 19th century which include Joseph Cooper Jnr in close proximity to the mill and residential houses on the island. These photographs are in black and white and sepia tones, which are constitutive of a past sense of time and place. Historical photographs bring an 'authentic' touch (or provide a sense of connection) to the past and in this context invoke an imagining of the mill reflected through the identities of the family who

built it. The grouping of historical family photographs is redolent of a family album, a familiar tribute to ancestors kept on display as remembrances for the future.¹⁸²

The objects displayed inside the mill perform an associative function to further contextualise the mill and its industrial past with a life that can be understood to embody manual labour and hard work through the presence of instruments that require skill and physical effort. These objects can be read in terms of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's classification as "instruments of display" (156). Although they invoke a sense of a past time and place materially and technologically distant to the here and now the objects (tools, household instruments) heighten an awareness of the substitution of an original for a copy. They do not appear authentic to the time period despite the presence of rust and wear. These objects on display elicit a tensional moment between past and present when authenticity is called into question but simultaneously enhances an understanding of how to interpret heritage, through the context of display and the objects on view. The purpose behind the use of replica objects in the context of this particular display is, I think, to educate and inform the visitor and stimulate ways of thinking about the past era of this place through an emphasis on instruments that require the use of the body. These objects are displayed to actualise a material and embodied understanding of a past way of life.

There is something quaint (or is this a mark of nostalgia?) and unpretentiousness about the display of history inside the mill, with its fragments of personal and familial history, gathered together to memorialise a keepsake of local importance. Lippard writes that "[h]istorical societies reflect (for the most part unconsciously) inherent ideologies as much as large museums do" for "[t]hey too are part of the "consciousness industry," and "the consciousness they evoke is very close to home" (*Lure* 91). The evocation of home through the display of family and genealogy is one way of producing a sense of connection to the past. The sense of colonial 'roots' embedded in the contexts of viewing are contained not only on site but also entwine throughout the landscape of the region. The contribution of the mill and by implication the Cooper family are recognised in relation to the wider realms of the

¹⁸² For a discussion of how photographs enhance a sense of the past and the ways they contribute toward the production of experiences and memories to shape senses of identity (personal, cultural, familial, and collective), see Tessa Morris-Suzuki.

region, and this suggests that the significance of this place exceeds location, extending also to other places within the Murray district and beyond. The identity of this place is attributed with personal, familial identity in relation to its maker/s (Joseph Cooper and the Cooper family). The reading of genealogical history away from home for those who visit this place potentially produces a strange yet familiar experience of the past. However, I am also conscious that there might also be other readings that the history of this place does not have on display. The historical record of the mill is fixed at a synchronic moment and makes sense of history through a linear sequence of key dates and events considered to be recognised (by whom I ask) as significant. This makes me wonder about the history that exists outside or escapes the official record. I think of what might have happened here after and between these significant moments and what other records of this place possibly exist that could potentially reveal other narrative threads and meanings.

Performing Place through Memory

The work of attributing significance to a place through heritage is a way of promoting and defining a sense of place-identity which evidences a connection with a remembered past. Places of the past invoke memory and as “memory is a mode of access to the past” it is important to consider not only what is being remembered but also the kinds of remembering occurring on site or in places of heritage. Heritage places which function to memorialise the past, is a particular use of both heritage and place which has drawn criticism for the way that a particular version and mode of remembering is (often) represented. The work of Kirk Savage which examines how civil war monuments in the United States are designed symbolically as a form of collective remembering – “Lest We Forget”, exemplifies “memory in external deposits, located not within people, but within shared public space” (qtd. in Lake 1). Memory in these contexts works as an aid to commemoration, to ensure the nation’s collective remembering of itself through the past is upheld and not forgotten in the present.¹⁸³ For Savage, “[m]onuments anchor collective remembering – a process dispersed, ever changing and ultimately intangible – in highly condensed, fixed and

¹⁸³However, “[p]aradoxically, remembering is a prelude to forgetting, and the collecting of error and overture to its eradication” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 159).

tangible sites” (qtd. in Lake 130-131). Heritage places perform a memorialising function, they stand in for memory.

Although Cooper’s mill no longer operates as a flour mill, the building acts (at least) as an important mnemonic device in remembering the significance of its former occupation and its contribution and interconnectedness throughout the region. The mill is considered to perpetuate historical memory as it performs the role of a public memorial to the early pioneers, a landmark that anchors collective remembering (Richards, *District* 232). Landmarks and memorials are a way of marking the landscape transforming place into a repository of/for memory. The discourses of heritage make sense of heritage places as a form of anchorage, hooks for locating identities and memories (in/to a place). However, Laurajane Smith recognises that there are different meanings underpinning the term ‘place’ in conceptualising an understanding of the relationship between identity, memory and heritage. In her definition,

[h]eritage is about a sense of *place*. Not simply in constructing an abstract sense of identity, but also in helping us position ourselves as a nation, community or individual and our ‘place’ in our cultural, social and physical world. Heritage, particularly in its material representations, provides not only a physical anchor or geographical sense of belonging, but also allows us to negotiate a sense of social ‘place’ or class/community identity, and a cultural place or sense of belonging. (Smith, *Uses* 75)

In light of my own negotiation with heritage places, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the impact of 9/11 and its aftermath had a complicating effect on the uses of such places in the urban context, acting as a kind of critique of heritage and identity at home. In order “to negotiate a sense of ‘place’” I have had to go elsewhere. Whether I experience any sense of “cultural place” or “sense of belonging” in the context of Cooper’s Mill is yet to be investigated. While I have engaged with some of the terms associated with the meaning of heritage I am yet to engage with a deeper understanding (in practice) of how the uses of heritage places, such as the mill, can be negotiated, shaped and transformed through performance. Being here will

hopefully act as the grounds for provocation – to re-frame what I have learned about this place in a way that might advance a different notion of heritage places.

Chapter 6

A Research Journey/Journal

In this chapter, I foreground the research that contributed towards shaping my creative exploration of Cooper's Mill.¹⁸⁴ The research was undertaken during 2003-2005 as part of the practical component of this thesis to dialectically inform the performance. Researching the mill produced pathways that opened up ways of knowing and ways of shaping my creative poetics of place. The aim of the chapter is to provide an account of some of the experiences and processes that emerged during my investigation of this heritage place, and which I came to identify as acts of (and for) creative research.¹⁸⁵ This chapter provides a framework for the reader to engage with the performance documentation that follows.

If there is a rationale for undertaking creative research it is to use this as a strategy to invigorate the research enquiry through "a program of experimentation" that can inform the making of "new poetics" (Ulmer xiii). In developing a poetics of place, the various modes, methods and materials (tools) of research that I engaged with throughout the research process became "generative resources" to inform the making of a performance work (Ulmer 3). The preliminary fieldwork process (discussed in Chapter 5) while inadvertently generating creative humus also began to prepare the grounds of my awareness, as evidenced by a topographical approach of "t-reading" the landscape; a reflexive framework informed by the mutual influence of place, embodied experience and critical interpretation. This fertile process prepares the ground in this part of the thesis where the act/s of researching Cooper's Mill generates seeds for creative experimentation and exploration in relation to the

¹⁸⁴ I use the term 'research process', in relation to this creative component of the thesis and refer to *Material Thinking: The Theory and Practice of Creative Research* by Paul Carter, as a useful reference and a key source published at the time of undertaking my research, to probe the question of the relationship between creative research and how to theorise the intellectual aspects by considering the process of making art as a way of thinking. Carter elucidates the function of creative research,

to show how the process of material thinking enables us to think differently about our human situation, and, by displaying in a tangible but non-reductive form its inevitable complexity, to demonstrate the great role works of art can play in the ethical project of *becoming* (collectively and individually) *oneself in a particular place*. (ii)

¹⁸⁵ In the performing arts, research models such as 'performance as research', 'practice-led research', and 'practice as research' situate research as a mode of engaging particular fields of knowledge with consideration given to the ways of thinking and doing that are generated in the process of enquiry. I began my thesis journey prior to the formalisation of creative research frameworks at Murdoch University. The 'doing' became co-determined by the theoretical frames and theories initially formulated in the earlier chapters of this thesis as well as the kinds of places and examples of performance that generated for me questions concerning how places affect human understandings of self, lived experience, and senses of place. For further discussions of performance as research practice, see Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter.

framing (and re-framing) of my enquiry into place. I use this research approach as a strategy for further engaging with ideas of place and developing modes of emplacement. Using research as a critical lens “opens an opportunity” to know this place which also includes recognizing the frames that shape this knowing (Ulmer 3).

I was interested in engaging with the mill as a place for performance, exploring modes of inhabitation to develop ways and means to approach performance-making. I wanted to see how and in what ways inhabiting this place would or could seed a performance. Therefore, the research process was framed by questions such as ‘what does being-here contribute towards place-making and how might this be developed further for performance practice?’ Essentially, I wanted to know how this place might influence the making of a performance. Researching Cooper’s Mill was a multi-faceted process with ways of knowing place strategically and intuitively explored to develop a working methodology for creative place-making. Rather than being a linear process, research unfolded in the sense of a journey producing pathways that became sites for multiple embodied, temporal and narrative experiences.¹⁸⁶

This chapter is a way of tracing the development of my research in relation to the mill. What I present is a partial document of some of the processes and activities that I felt came to matter.¹⁸⁷ Paul Carter considers that to ask the question: “What matters? ... is to embark on an intellectual adventure peculiar to the making process” (Carter, *Material* xi). Rather than discuss in detail the making of the performance work, I focus on some of the modes, methods and materials shaped by the research that became defining areas of practice. The relationship between research and practice created a framework for engaging with the mill (which contributed towards the performance and areas of creative production). The co-ordinates of my research

¹⁸⁶ The notion of journeying that I am suggesting here is a mode of being in place that invokes both dwelling and mobility. The experiential dimensions of a journey are crucial for creative practice as a mode that can inform practical methods in producing a sense of place. The relationship between journeying and place is explored in creative practice through walking which I discuss in Chapter 3.

¹⁸⁷ I realise that documenting a process of making raises the question of translation and with this potential issues concerning areas that are overlooked, invisible and inexplicable. I run the risk of misrepresenting aspects of the research process as well as omitting many details that build up a sense of a coherent or complete picture. However, the fragments I present here can be read as connected to ongoing processes of place research and practical methods for further creative exploration and intellectual enquiry.

journey are represented through a selection of writings and images which appear throughout this chapter and which are identified under the following sub-headings:

1. **Field Notes:** these sections of writing (in italics) are drawn from my journals where I wrote about Cooper's Mill and the island as a way of reflexively engaging with being here (based on being in situ). Field note writing was a useful tool for recording and remembering thoughts, feelings and experiences connected to the fieldwork process. This mode of writing was not intended as an objective construction of reality but a way of recording perceptions, moments and acts which rendered meaningful the process of being here at the mill/island. During the fieldwork the field notes enabled me to retrace some of my steps and pursue further areas of enquiry. The field notes also assisted me with activities of interpretation and translation during the research and this enabled me to reflect on how I was coming to know this place.
2. **Fieldwork:** these sections of writing provide information about the fieldwork, and include details regarding location, geographical context and the kinds of methods being deployed in the field.¹⁸⁸ The fieldwork led to the development of a practice informed by a phenomenological framework that called for an embodied approach for being in place. This perspective enabled me to explore and experiment with getting a measure of place in ways that considered the body as a basis for knowing place. Place knowledge was a process of practicing a form of emplacement through embodying an ethnographic disposition of being-here in place. This form of situated knowledge led to reflexive, responsive and imaginative modes of approaching the fieldwork.
3. **Theoretical Reflection:** these sections of writing provide discursive threads for the reader and characterise some of the ways I was thinking about place that called for further explication through the use of theory. The use of particular ideas and discourses implemented during the research process

¹⁸⁸ There were sixteen field trips to Cooleenup Island.

reflect an approach that aims to weave together theoretical and practical dimensions of creative research. Rather than creating a division between theory and practice, ways of thinking about place informed my knowing and became a way of framing particular aspects of the fieldwork which led me to consider this process as the building of pathways for learning how I was coming to make sense of place. The concepts that I found useful at various stages of the research took me into different disciplinary fields providing footholds for rethinking what the terrain of performance and its relationship to place-based research can encompass and where this might be useful in terms of questioning the role of theory in framing the meaning of research.

4. **Dialogues:** the nature of the research process involved finding out as much as possible about the mill and the island. The ways and means of doing research drew on a mix of qualitative research methods including conversations and communication with a diverse range of people. Researching became a shared process of knowledge creation (Birkeland 18). One of the areas that I pursued in practice was oral history interviewing that grew out of conversations with key people concerning the history of Cooper's Mill.¹⁸⁹ One particular area of practice that raised questions which proved to be philosophically and methodologically insightful was oral history interviewing. I include part of an interview with a descendent of the Cooper family as evidence of this area of practice.
5. **Documentation:** these sections represent the collecting and gathering aspect of the research process. The documents provide a particular line of enquiry that bring past and present into a contiguous relation. These materials are connected to particular ways of seeing the mill and function as a creative way (for the performer and audience) for considering how to actively engage with the past in the present. While 'collective' accounts of place history have a tendency to uphold particular place identities the process of re-collecting documents from diverse locations became an interesting way of knowing place to be explored in creative practice.

¹⁸⁹ This was also one of the most challenging areas of the research process and would have benefited from further development, more time and the contribution of more human subjects.

6. **Embodied Practice:** these sections engage with the embodied perspectives that developed from the research methodology. The (my) body became crucial to the process of knowing place that extended throughout all strands of enquiry. Knowing place was shaped by the felt, lived, sensed and embodied experience of exploring the mill and its surrounding environs. Inhabiting place through embodied practice opened up pathways to be developed further in creative production. The practice of walking is one of the areas I discuss in relation to contextualising place-making and embodied practice. This practice became a means to utilise a particular way of seeing and making sense of experiencing a place as a tool of investigation and creation.

Field Notes (14 October 2003)

The Visit: Cultic sites

I am shown Cooper's Mill for the first time by the heritage advisor which comes at the end of a whirlwind tour of heritage places throughout the Peel region. I am dazed and confused and have no idea of where we are as the drive has involved criss-crossing, backtracking, taking short-cuts and getting lost all over the landscape. Not all heritage places are easily accessed by car and not all are located near main roads. Signage to indicate heritage places is not always apparent. We drive to the edge of a sandbar and I am immediately stunned by the glare of white rendering that covers the exterior of the mill. This vision is blinding. The affect of seeing (or trying to see) is disorienting making me feel strangely dislocated. This dislocation is further amplified by the realization of distance and nearness as the mill is located on an island that is only a stones throw away from where I stand. Water surrounds the island. I feel a sense of limit traversing this geography and simultaneously a need to explore this limit. Standing on the 'other' side on the sandy edge I experience uncertainty, "where/what are the limits to this island?"

Crossing over requires engaging with the river, a natural boundary. The heritage advisor's contact arrives in a 4WD with an inflatable boat to row us across to the island. It is difficult to know the distance across (10 metres?). I feel the physical pull

of the waters current and the muscular tension as part of the process of navigating the channel to get to the jetty which juts out from the island. We land and alight. The shift from land to water to land makes me aware of the embodied and spatial experience involved in the journey to get here. The heritage advisor gives me a brief tour of the inside of the mill as well as the playground on the other side of the island. I don't know what I'm seeing. I have taken in a lot of different places today in a short space of time. The experience has left me reeling. I have brought my camera along but leave without taking photos. The heritage advisor mentions that the caretaker, situated at the residence on the island since the 1980s, had recently passed away here.

Theoretical Reflection:

A consideration of Benjamin's notion of 'aura', glossed from social and cultural theorist Chris Rojek, is useful in contextualising the experience I have described above (*Indexing* 52 – 74). Benjamin's analysis of capitalist culture ("The Work of Art" essay) personifies a world of commodification, (a "dreamworld") through the term "phantasmagoria", wherein desire/fantasy and repression operate as twin motifs or motivations which compel human beings to seek out intense forms of experience (qtd. in Rojek, *Indexing* 57). He writes about,

the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its re-production. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction. (*Illuminations* 223)

Benjamin is primarily concerned here with the changing status of the art object, its 'aura' and the demise of its originality through the complex intermingling of technique, technology and artistic practice at a time when modernity was undergoing mass transformation in existing modes of production. The aura (presence) of the art object is defined in Benjamin's analysis, according to Rojek, through "the unique manifestation of distance" (*Indexing* 58). There are parallels here between the aura of

the art object described by Benjamin and the aura of heritage/tourism places. Heritage places, recognised as valuable symbols of Western cultural identity, mark the landscape in ways that evoke meaning, history and a sense of identity. The boundaries that surround many of these places are there to preserve their unique status but also work to reinforce the sense of distance and inaccessibility to the public. Many people travel to visit heritage places because of the cultural value attributed to relics from the past.

The value of the mill, while contextualised in terms of heritage, is also informed by the unique context of its island location. Islands hold a particular fascination and popular appeal as holiday destinations. The location of the mill yokes together heritage and tourism. The lure of islands can be attributed to the kinds of imaginings they evoke and the corresponding meanings and associations they elicit. Tourism promotes islands as ‘fantasy’ destinations to escape to, places identified as locations that correspond to an idea representative of being “there” rather than “here”. This way of thinking upholds a traditional image of islands as being removed from everyday life as well as ideas of boundedness. This configuration would seem to suggest “a yearning for seclusion from modernity” (Lowenthal, *Islands* 203). Recent studies aim to explore and challenge some of the historical and contemporary imaginings of islands, yet pervasive ideas about islands continue to endure in imagination and cultural memory.¹⁹⁰

The locational context places the mill out of reach as the estuary partially separates island from the mainland. There is no bridge enabling people to easily cross over and experience the mill up close. The distance to the mill can be measured in metres and yet immediately raises the question of accessibility. The attraction of this place for me is in a sense, its “unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be” (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 222). In describing the cultural uses of place/s and travel in tourism, Rojek considers the allure of particular places and travel locations as “curiosity about what lies beyond one’s immediate realm as an innate feature of human beings.” Rojek believes “that a desire to view or engage in contrary or antithetical forms of life is also a powerful motivation in tourist experience”

¹⁹⁰ For example, see Edmond and Smith.

(*Indexing* 58). I am interested in finding out what kind of place Cooleenup Island is (as well as questioning what it is that I find). Is this place defined (only) by heritage? Is the island a microcosm of the broader Australian context? What forms of life, and ways of experiencing place will I encounter, produce and engage with in-relation to/with this place?

Fieldwork:

After several field excursions I learn that Cooleenup Island is not independent but belongs to a cluster of islands at the mouth of the Murray River delta.¹⁹¹ The island is socially circumscribed as a location for locals, visitors and tourists to experience the ‘unique presence’ of the mill and also a place to engage in recreational activities (there is a playground area consisting of picnic benches, and barbeque facilities).¹⁹² The way the island functions today is informed by the conjoined frames of heritage and tourism which shape the kinds of experiences (permitted) to be had here.

¹⁹¹ The Western Australian Naturalists’ Club has undertaken extensive field studies of the fauna and flora on the islands of the Murray River delta as well as studies in the geomorphology of the area since 1967. The delta is made up of nine river channels and eight islands. For further information about the Yunderup delta islands, see D. L. Serventy.

¹⁹² The recreational area of the island was ‘upgraded’ during the fieldwork process to include barbeque facilities and a playground for public use.

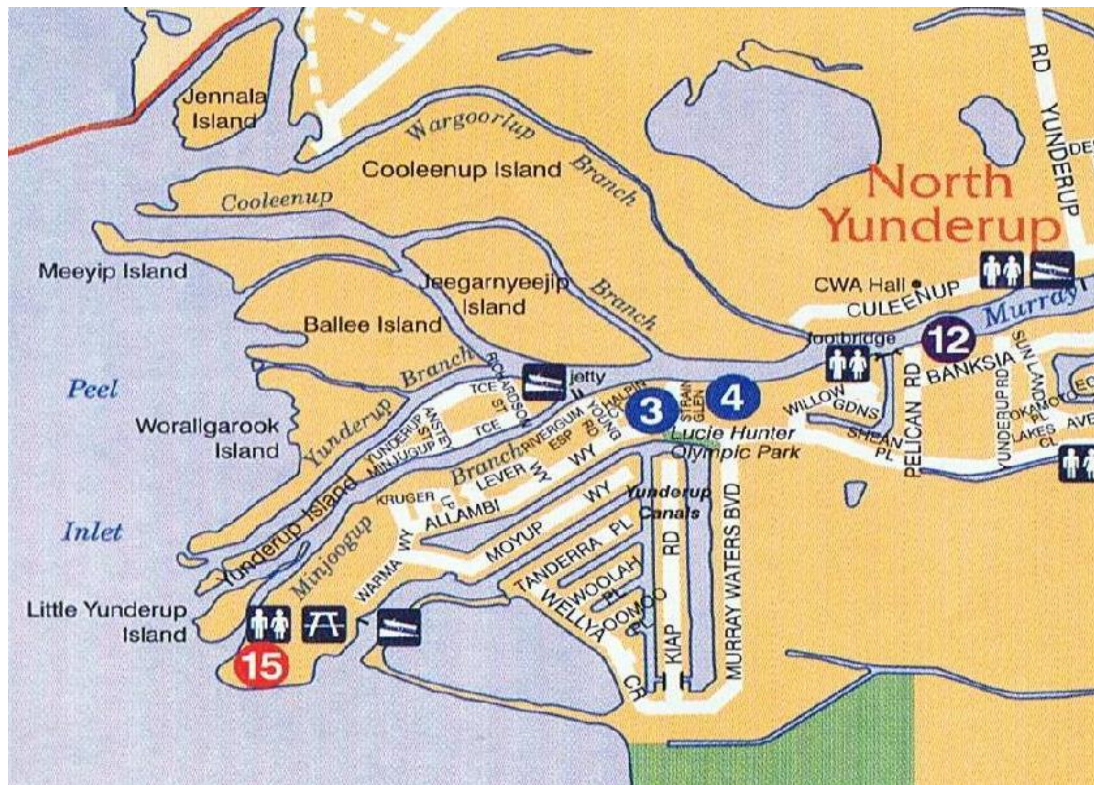


Fig. 23. Detail of Murray River delta, *Shire of Murray: Map & Information Guide*. 2002.

My initial research is framed by questions such as: What kind of experience/s do I (the performer) want to create for the audience (or reader) by engaging with this place? What constitutes ‘this place’? Am I referring to Cooper’s Mill (heritage place) or Cooleenup Island (tourism location)? What about the other islands and the estuary environment which together form part of this regional landscape? In what ways will I make sense of this place? Am I here to explore this island? Will this process result in experiences that can then be used to verify or critique existing notions and imaginings of islands? Am I here to re-vision the experience of engaging with Cooper’s Mill? Or am I here to do something else? How do I know in what way to proceed except by listening to the questions that being-here generates? I consider the kinds of questions emerging as seeds to fertilise imagination. Imagination, experience (through accumulation) and geography are crucial for how I will engage with ‘what matters’ here.

One area of the creative research process is fieldwork and this will involve *being-here in this place* as a framework for focused exploration in a way that centres on the

lived, embodied experience. The idea underpinning this approach and which I aim to explore in practice is to engage a sensorial ethnography in relation to this place by focusing on 'being-here' (a mode of inhabiting place) as a form of research methodology. I envisage this part of the process as a critical and creative tool providing the foundations for a phenomenological (embodied) sensing of this place as a way towards illuminating the nature, meaning and possibilities of this place. Questions to guide the fieldwork, that I aim to explore through being-here, are whether there are other ways of knowing this place. I am interested in exploring this to consider whether the heritage/tourism experience here can be performed differently. I think this can be used to counter-act the monumentalising function/role of this place? These are areas to be worked through in the process of being-here.

To engage with this place requires travelling by car and the use of a boat. An artist as residence situation, in terms of camping at the island, has not been permitted.¹⁹³ Each field trip will therefore involve travelling to and from the island in a day. I will travel by car driving from the northern suburbs of Perth down south to the locality of Yunderup. The distance between Perth and Yunderup is approximately 78 kilometres. I will need to decide how many field trips to take to Yunderup and also set a date for the performance so the research process and fieldwork have an end date. To get to Cooper's Mill I will be taking the most direct route driving along the Kwinana Freeway which follows on to the Old Coast Road, turning left onto Pinjarra Road, and then right onto Tonkin Drive.

¹⁹³ The logistics of undertaking fieldwork that would culminate in a performance at Cooper's Mill was a complex process. Ethics approval was obtained from Murdoch University for the fieldwork and other areas of the research process. The Shire of Murray, responsible for the management of Cooper's Mill, gave permission for me to undertake fieldwork at the mill and also for a performance to take place there. However, permission for me to be based at Cooper's Mill while undertaking a period of fieldwork there could not be granted either by the university or the Shire of Murray. I needed to be living somewhere 'residential' while undertaking fieldwork. It was not possible for me to bring camping equipment to Cooleenup Island as camping was not permitted (the use of camping became prohibited by the Shire of Murray in 1994). I considered living somewhere in close proximity to the island but cost was a factor that needed to be considered as the fieldwork funds were allocated for particular resources. The processes involved in obtaining approval for various aspects of this research also took time.

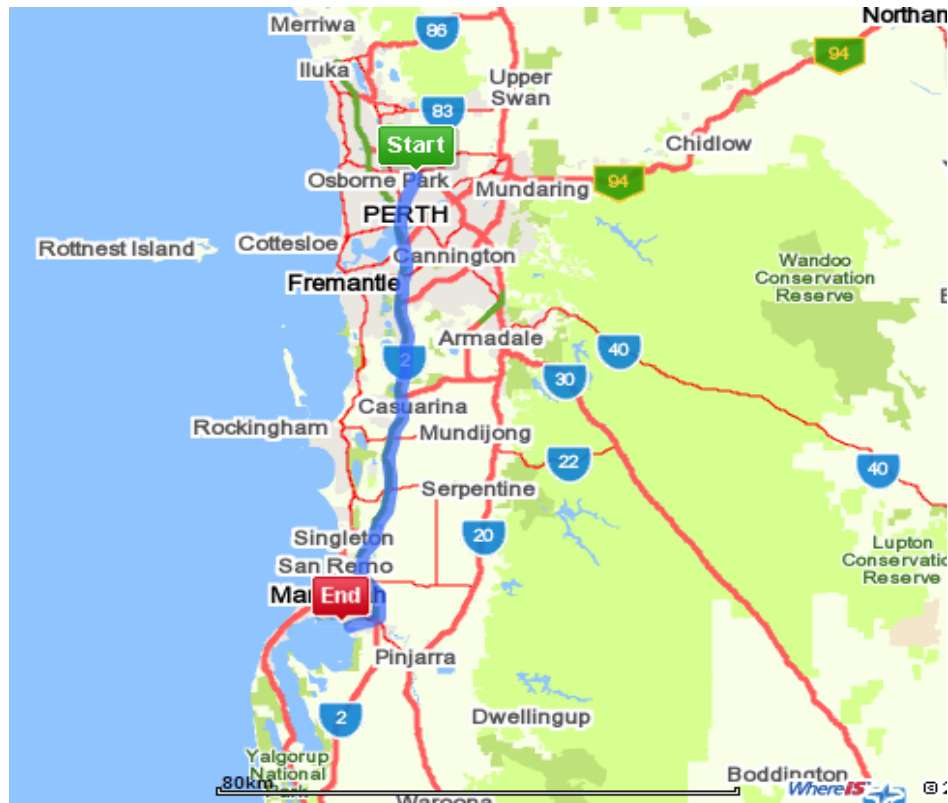


Fig. 24. Online map showing route taken from Perth to Yunderup. Map. *whereis.com*. Web. 30 Nov. 2010.

However, in January 2004 I move from Perth to Australind which becomes my new place of residence for the year.¹⁹⁴ Australind is a small town in the Peel region of the south-western corridor of Western Australia, situated approximately 90 kilometres from Yunderup. I am now travelling from south to north so I have inverted my original frame. Unfamiliar with either Australind or Yunderup means getting to know two places simultaneously. Ethnography works on the premise of familiarity and estrangement. I am out of my comfort zones both in ‘life’ and also in relation to ‘art’. Travelling is becoming a necessity for many areas of my research as well as a frame that is conditioning the process of my lived experience of being in place.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ I was still travelling to and from Perth during this time. This is where life and art can again be seen as converging and mutually shaping the research process. After a lengthy process of place-negotiation and seeking permission to make use of heritage places in the metropolitan area of Perth (2001-2003), I began to explore heritage places within other regional localities. I became interested in the location of heritage places within non-urban landscapes. I relocated to Australind for many reasons including that of the personal. I rationalised that the time it would take to travel to Yunderup would be approximately the same whether I was living in Australind or Perth.

¹⁹⁵ For a consideration of ethnographic practices in relation to site-specificity in art, see Alex Coles.



Fig. 25. Online Map showing route taken from Australind to Yunderup. Map. *whereis.com*. Web. 30 Nov. 2010.

Field Notes (29 April 2004)

Fieldtrip #3: Navigating and negotiating place/s

Arrived at the island approx 12.30 pm, used the foot pump to inflate the boat and then with great difficulty rowed over to the island. A man in a canoe passed me mid stream. I tried to not 'appear' as though I was struggling. I didn't want to look like I needed help even though I was starting to get a bit worried about being carried down river. Where would this branch of the river take me? I am almost tempted to let go, to see where I will drift, but self preservation (and adrenaline) kicks in. Undertaking a derivé in these conditions is too much of a risk. Rowing is a challenge but I shall master it yet. Disembarked at 1pm and could see two other women walking through and outside the mill. I had about half an hour walking around the perimeter of the site with my Dictaphone (which decided to play up!) notating signs, features and aspects which came to my attention and which I actively sought out. I felt like I was performing an autopsy on the structural remains of the place.

PO, the caretaker, arrived and we talked for some time.¹⁹⁶ Afterwards I sat outside at one of the picnic tables and wrote about my first impressions and what the hell was I going to be doing here. PO came over to where I was a little while later and then rowed over to the other side to pick up his wife C who had just finished a shift of nursing. I couldn't help but think how romantic that seemed, the image of rowing across to pick up someone you love and then row them back to an island home. PO had asked if I'd like a cuppa and so I followed the couple up to their home, which is close to the mill itself. We chatted about a variety of things. I excused myself at about 3.20pm. They gave me some fresh frozen mullet to take with me, which PO had caught from the river.

I went and did a bit more exploration of the inside of the mill and then rowed back to the other side at 4pm. This time the rowing was much more smooth and coordinated. I took many photos, mostly close-up, throughout the session so I'll download these and notate them. The surrounding river views are breath taking. I took my time packing up the 4WD, soaked up the last of the warmth. My feet were coated in several places with dark grey mud and my skin felt layered with salt from the water.

Cooking the fish later at home I get to thinking about the notion of exchange (I will return a gift of herbs to PO and C) and what kind of exchange will take place between myself and this place by being-there. I read a book about Joseph Bueys, the one with a picture of him on the front cover holding up with one hand a big salted cod.

Fieldwork:

Part of the research process involves reflexively engaging with the experience of being-here at the mill/island. Cooper's Mill is a heritage/tourism site and functions as a landmark that memorialises the old pioneers within this district. This is the socio-culturally prescribed performance of this place. Touring and visiting places are

¹⁹⁶ I am not sure whether I can use real names or stick to abbreviations. I did not get a signed waiver from the caretaker during the fieldwork process so I have omitted details of conversations I had with this person.

cultural practices, discursively constructed and undertaken by people as meaningful acts.¹⁹⁷ Being-here also involves taking into consideration other people's experiences of the mill. I engage in conversations with people who visit the mill/island.¹⁹⁸ Conversations are often centred on the mill and its physicality but also include enquiry as to my own purpose in being-here. Many of the people visit with other people such as family and friends. There is a social dimension to being-here and while I do not consciously set out to do a sociological investigation of the visitor/tourist experience here I am aware that this is a perspective that could be explored further for other kinds of research agendas. Due to the small scale of the mill and the island the heritage experience is aimed at a local level as the size of this place is unable to accommodate too many visitors/tourists at a time. Being unable to easily access this place without the use of a boat is also part of the designated heritage plan with its concern to maintain a sustainable level of visitor/tourist interaction. There is also a lack of signage advertising the mill as a heritage/tourist attraction from the main road connecting Mandurah and Pinjarra which suggests that this place is designed to be used locally by those who are aware of this place or who visit the Pinjarra Tourist Centre and are given information about this place.

The kind of experience people have here is important in making sense of place and constructing senses of place. Whoever visits here will experience this place in different ways. However, I am aware of the particular version of history on display inside the mill produced by the contributions from the local historical society, heritage interpretations by the Heritage Council of Western Australia and the Shire of Murray. There is an emphasis here on reading history, through the presence of text and images displayed inside the mill, in grasping the intended (historical) meaning of this place. I observe people entering inside the mill, reading the information on display, looking around and then leaving. I think about how far people have travelled to get to the mill, where they have come from, who they are, what they do here, what they think, what they feel? What is their experience of this place? Is this place familiar or strange? Are they aware of the heritage frames or do they see something else? Why do they visit Cooper's Mill? Are there other heritage places within this

¹⁹⁷ For more information on perspectives of tourism performance, and how practices make tourist places, see Bærenholdt et al.

¹⁹⁸ This also includes the caretakers who temporarily reside at the house adjacent to the mill and whose duties include maintaining the upkeep of the mill and the island.

region that they will also visit? Visiting this place is part of its history as photographs from the Mandurah Historical Society show people standing against, or situated in close proximity to, the mill.¹⁹⁹ Do people take photographs of their visits to this place today? I am yet to observe anyone participate in this kind of activity.

It is impossible to answer these questions concerning the nature of experience in relation to this place in any definitive sense. With each field trip different questions are emerging along with a range of different experiences. Spending time here is building (accumulatively) an image of this place and also spaces for being and experiencing which is a generative and reflexive process producing meanings and possibilities (for performance).

Questions provide the stimulus for me to pursue particular areas of enquiry, to follow up leads and have conversations with people regarding the mill. Questions shed light on the kinds of areas that are (for me) unknowns. I use the questions that the research generates as a way of creating an opening for me in coming to know this place. The openings become pathways that shift my perspective away from knowing 'answers' to seeing what happens in the process of raising 'questions'. Sometimes research is about suspending one's desire to know the 'truth' or to find a definite answer to a question. I also consider the aim of research. The process of doing fieldwork involves critical reflection, asking questions but also being prepared to experience states of not-knowing, ambiguity and uncertainty.

I know, for example, that the houses built by the Coopers were situated somewhere in close proximity to the mill but the photographs I have reveal no clues with regards to where they might have once been. In pursuing this particular facet of history I have spoken with numerous people, consulted the Battye Library to trawl through historical records, explored the island's environs and studied (extensively) photographs. Rather than seeing this as a failed line of enquiry I reflect on the processes involved and the kinds of activities undertaken in attempting to find out a particular facet about the mill. The generative and cumulative affect of questions direct me to look for gaps that might exist in the historical knowledge of this place.

¹⁹⁹ The photographs I am referring to here are featured in the performance on the DVD.

Enquiry is also shaping the process of doing fieldwork and research, producing directions and giving focus to my curiosity that will contribute to the framing of the performance.

I consider what kinds of experiences I want to evoke. I would like to evoke an experiential sense of history. How am I going to do this? In creating the performance, rather than telling, representing, etc, I would like to evoke a sense of the lived experience and I think that this can be rendered through what Louise Steinman calls “a textural gestalt of that experience” (130).

Theoretical Reflection:

The use of lived experience is a particular research strategy that is grounding this creative investigation of place (rubbing up against aspects of the social, cultural, and historical). While this kind of place is guiding the research I am getting to know this place through the felt immediacy of being here, that is, by experiencing place in an embodied sense. ‘Experience’ and the ‘experiential’ combine to inform this embodied knowledge. Although a range of research strategies, modes and methods are being deployed throughout the process of engaging with place these are being gained, learned, cast aside, forgotten and re-learned through what I can only term as ‘experience’. There is no field manual to guide this research process. My relationship to the production and interpretation of experience is a constitutive horizon that is shaping the making of place and the performance. There are many dimensions to ‘experience’ including emotional, embodied, and cognitive strands and these shape how and what we (as researchers) see as well as write about in relation to place.²⁰⁰

Writing through and of the experience of being-here is a reflexive mode rather than an attempt to provide a definitive sense of this place. I am departing from certain preconceived (learned) and institutionalised ideas about knowledge as I come to realise (through experience) that the relationship between what one knows and how one knows is a complex interaction between researcher and researched. Although

²⁰⁰ Lived experience and subjectivity are considered to be interconnected in the construction of knowledge. For more information regarding the different yet interconnected dimensions of lived experience see Carolyn Ellis and Michael C. Flaherty.

research frameworks often privilege interpretative approaches which seek a transference from what is 'unknown' to that of what is 'known', my approach resembles a complex interrelationship between knowing and translation. The journey to knowledge is discussed by Birkeland who, drawing on the work of Evelyn Fox Keller explains that, "[o]ne does not move from A to B, but in complex, interactive and dynamic processes... in a way that relies on connectivity and reciprocity between objectivity and subjectivity" (22). Not everything I experience can be interpreted and easily translated into writing. Making sense of place is an interpretive process that requires thinking, reflecting and feeling as I work through key experiences and how they might connect to the purpose of researching 'here'.

This brings me back to the over-arching purpose of engaging with place through an investigative paradigm termed 'research'. The experience (embodied) of being here is a way of accumulating a range of impressions, images and perceptions about this place. Each visit yields experiences that generate meanings as well as transform existing or previously held notions about this place. I approach being in place as an experiential modality underpinned with intentionality. I am here to explore, experience, and learn new ways of seeing and being here. Experience is a phenomenological perspective, a mode I am learning to tune into as a way of inhabiting this place as a tool for research.

Field Notes (4 July 2004)

Performing heritage

On two separate occasions of being-here I have observed narrative retellings that affirm genealogical connections with Cooper's Mill. Both accounts were by men that spoke of family history and ancestry to this place and throughout the Peel region. The stories were shared with small groups (friends or family?) of 3-4 people. Today I am sitting at one of the picnic benches near the mill writing field notes and I overhear what is being spoken. One of the stories is particularly memorable. The man telling the story has walked down from the recreational area with a small group of people to show them the mill. When the group re-emerge from inside the mill, the

man leans against the mill with a beer in his hand while speaking about the family connection. He is wearing thongs, t-shirt and shorts.

I think about how this place can lend itself to a performance of personal heritage and identity. I also think about Australian-ness and constructions of national identity and claiming a sense of belonging through place/s. The heritage (history) of this place is being called upon to authenticate the story the man tells. Physically touching the mill speaks of a personal connection to this place's past but it also resonates beyond this location to include other places within the regional landscape. There is a casual and laid back sense about the story and the way it is told. I think about how this kind of performance enables the person to claim a sense of authentic belonging that encompasses both roots and routes throughout this landscape. Being in, and moving through, a place or landscape where there are memories and recollections of familial relationships is one aspect that I would like to explore further in relation to Cooper's Mill.

Dialogues:

In what other ways has this place survived? Are there other records I can consult to find out about the history of this place? Oral histories, memories, photographs and other forms of documentation are also traces of this place. To do this kind of work involves legwork, driving, emailing and conversations by phone and in person. Researching Cooper's Mill takes me to a range of different places and puts me in touch with people whom I am informed 'know' this place. There are families connected to the early pioneers that still live in the Murray district. I have conversations with several people on the phone. However, I am unable to interview some of these people as many of them are quite old and even they admit to me that their memories are not what they used to be. The heritage advisor for the Peel region suggests that I speak with Hal Sutton, a descendent of the Cooper family.

I participate in an oral history interviewing workshop held at Settlers' Hall in Australind. I learn techniques about approaching the interviewee, the importance of listening and the kinds of questions to consider in framing an interview.

I travel from Australind to Perth to interview Hal Sutton. It is interesting to note that the place where he lives is in close proximity to the Swan River and Preston Point Mill (a former windmill and now heritage tourism attraction).

In this preliminary interview I set out with some general questions as well as more specific questions regarding the mill, but I soon realise that I am along for a journey, a life journey that would be impossible to provide a comprehensive account of here. History is being remembered here and now (at a table in Hal Sutton's apartment). In each moment of telling meanings and memories are being made, spoken, pointed to, shifted around (through photographs) and brought into view. The places that are vividly recalled by Sutton are those that evoke the senses, for example the smell of bread being baked by his mother at Sutton's farm. The interview traverses a range of different places in time and localised space connected to a plethora of sensory experience.

Preliminary Interview:²⁰¹

Hal Sutton: That's the Cooper family (HS pointing to a photograph he places on the table). My grandfather and grandmother (pointing them out in the photograph). That's James Cooper (pointing to him in the photograph). He's the son of the original Cooper that came out here in 1830.

Larissa Pryce: Is that Henry Cooper?

HS: No, no, he was Joseph. And he came out on the *Warrior*.

LP: Can I just start with asking you some questions? For the record, what is your full name?

HS: Henry James Sutton. I was born on the 13th of February 1913.

LP: Where were you born?

HS: Actually I was born in Perth although my mother and father lived in Mandurah. At that time they were living in Bulls cottage over on the Sutton estate. My mother was a Cooper, Violet Cooper. She was the daughter of James Cooper and Eleanor. Eleanor, she was originally a Tuckey.

²⁰¹ Interview conducted with Hal Sutton on 18 November 2004. Some words on the recording are not clear and these are noted in transcript.

LP: So a Cooper married a Tuckey?

HS: The Tuckeys arrived in 1830 in April, so the family was here when the state was only 6 or 8 months old. Well then, the other side of the family, the Suttons, they were late comers; they arrived in 1839. They arrived out here in a boat called the *Hindu*.

LP: Did you have any siblings?

HS: I had seven, there were seven in the family; I will get to that. My grandmother on my father's side, she was a McClary. All my ancestors were in WA in the Murray Mandurah area.

LP: So are you coming from the second generation of pioneers?

HS: I'm the third generation. My grandfather James Cooper, he was born in 1836. He married in 1865. This is a picture of my mother. (*HS points to a photo*) She was the second youngest of the family; the youngest was a brother. James was the eldest; he was born in 1866.

LP: Where was this picture taken?

HS: Taken in Mandurah. Back of the <indecipherable>. Do you know where the museum is? Right across the road from where the museum is. You might see in the background there, you see a little bit of roof there, that's the old hall. That was the agricultural hall built in 1894.

LP: So that is nine children? (*LP points to photo*)

HS: That was nine, but they lost a few. That wasn't unusual in those days. I think there was about 13 or 14 families like that.

LP: And your mother? What did she do?

HS: My grandmother, she lived in a little old cottage. Nowadays you can't see it very well; it is hidden behind <indecipherable> between the corner shop and the Brighton hotel. They had a place there and they used to take in boarders and old grandfather, he used to run cattle. In his early days he used to run the old mill; Coopers mill. He and his brother took over from his father. His father built the mill.

LP: This is your great grand father?

HS: My great grandfather, he lived in a place called Redcliffe, back of the Pinjarra; I'll show you <pause> back of the Pinjarra golf course, that's the house there (*HS points to photo*) and he was allocated land on the Murray river and then he had this idea of building the mill but he built it down on a little island at the entrance of the Murray river into the estuary.

LP: Did he already own that property then?

HS: I don't know. I suppose he must have bought it because he built a house down there. It was probably granted to him, as they did in those days. Why he picked down there, is that you have the prevailing wind across the estuary, and the people who grind the corn, the farmers around Pinjarra, they used to take their corn down to the river by boat, so it was well thought out, as they had all the sea breeze and sails. They got all the wind coming across the estuary and sea breezes. And when they built the mill on the island there was no stone, so they carted and sailed the stone across from where Falcon is.

LP: Falcon?

HS: Falcon, near Miami Hill. They carted the stone across on barges, going across with land breezes in the morning and come back on the sea breeze in the afternoon at a later stage. The old stone mason that built the mill, his name was Stinton. He also built the mill down Busselton. He built that Busselton mill and then he came up and built this mill for my great grandfather.

During the interview I am aware of the relational dynamics and the kind of energy it takes to be in a listening mode, as well as the empathic response this particular process elicits from me. I am a spectator here, listening to a story that traverses many places throughout the region. I think about embodied memory and watch the movements of Hal Sutton's hands. The recording device plays up and when I play back the tape later to listen to the interview the recording I hear is not of a very good quality. The sound quality reminds me of old recordings taken from many years ago.

I wonder whether there is actually much to be told about the mill apart from what I have already found in documents and archives. Perhaps I was hoping for some details of visits to the mill by Hal Sutton, some childhood memory? I think about whether I want to present a memoir at Cooper's Mill. I want to get a sense of the kind of people the Cooper's were in both word and body. I would like to present aspects of the research process, such as interviewing, by including them somehow within the frame of the performance. Perhaps I could film an interview with Hal Sutton and then transpose it across my body, or have a section of me undertaking the interview while situated inside the mill. This would require further interviews and trips to Perth. I ask Hal Sutton if he would like to participate in the performance by telling some of his family history to an audience but he does not think he would be able to do it.

Later, back in Australind, I reflect on the nature of memories spoken and embodied. I recall the play of hands used to gesture to photographs or emphasize aspects of story and the whistling sound of Hal Sutton's voice. How will I transform the stories I am collecting into a performance? I reflect on what Paul Carter says when he asks, "How can we inhabit our histories differently?" (*Dark* 19). I play the recorded interview both at the mill and at a studio. The story being spoken evokes images and key words evoke movements. I am listening with my body and the visceral materiality of sound assists me with building up a choreographic palette based on the information about people and places Hal Sutton mentions in the interview. The recording is text and texture. Greg Denning writes that,

[w]e cannot describe the past independently of our knowing it, any more than we can describe the present independently of our knowing it. And, knowing it, we create it, we textualise it. That is the circle, hermeneutic if you like, of our human being. Nonetheless, we have a sense that the past is text-able. The past is everything that has happened-every heartbeat, every sound, every molecular movement. (41)

The performance of history and memory is an area of practice that I would like to explore further in relation to evoking an experiential sense of history at the mill.²⁰²

Embodied Practice: walking

Walking is a way of getting to know the topography of a place. Cooper's Mill is located on an island with a path that connects the heritage site to the recreation area. The rest of the island is unknown to me. There are no paths that mark out other routes for walking. Bush vegetation, scrub and swamp land forms the terrain that exists on the other side of the heritage and recreation areas. There are no signs warning visitors to keep out. The vegetation acts as a border to frame public space

²⁰² This is one area of enquiry that I wanted to explore further but due to the availability of the interviewee, the limits of my financial resources and the time frame of the research as well as the constant travelling which was taking its toll on me physically, it was difficult to organise an ongoing series of interviews.

and foreground the purpose of being here: to engage/view with heritage and recreation.

Is there a way of opening up these borders? I walk into the bushland trying to stay close to the edges of the island. Walking here is a process of navigating and negotiating the terrain. I want to experience the topography of this place and walking becomes a multi-sensorial mode that exercises the muscles and imagination. In walking I feel that I am both dwelling and travelling. I record the process of walking on my Dictaphone, describing embodied sensations, flora and fauna, thoughts, emotions, images, memories as well as perceptions of the terrain.

In the process of recording this walk I am translating the experience into a poetic act of place-making. There are other places on this island apart from the ones publicly on view. I would like to creatively re-invent this place by exploring the boundaries that exist between 'island' and 'mill'. This will involve re-framing the experience of being-here or accentuating the heritage/tourism frames that are currently in place. There is also a swampland nearby. Walking is a way of reading the island with the body. I encounter flora and fauna in the process. I am not familiar with many forms of vegetation. Is there documentation of the island's geomorphology? I contact the Naturalist Society to find out more about this. I am heading into what feels like unknown terrain. I feel like I am embodying a landscape rather than attempting to perform inside a place, although there are shifts between these different approaches.

The walks I discussed in Chapter 3 are a way for the performers to experience various tracts of country that are familiar and yet also strange. Walking is a mode of experientially engaging with the terrain that informs both performers' politics and poetics. Walking elicits reflections (about self, topography, memory, history) becoming a way of re-framing life histories embedded in the pathways that are travelled through, across and in. Travelling on foot is a form of critical ethnography, a way of writing and a way of being written upon, a process that opens up embodied being to what is felt, immediate and live(d). I write 'live(d)' here as the performances give rise to written reflections, that disclose the fleeting and ephemeral but memorable moments experienced while walking. The writing evidences the present

(live) as it is passing into the past (lived). Reading these written traces re-activates topography as a temporal, spatial, embodied and narrative experience.

While walking, for me here, is enacted in a similar way I have no historical connection to this place, no fragments of stories passed down through second-hand memories. The act is performed as a way of consciously connecting mind and body with place. Translating the experience of walking to a recording device produces live(d) threads of embodying place. What will I do with these threads? Will they form one of the pathways for opening up the senses to a listening of this place? Part of the process of conducting this research (practice) is to negotiate what I will do with these threads.

Fieldwork: exploring and embodying place

I am beginning to characterise fieldwork as fluid processes. I experience shifts in thinking that occur during moments of field work when I am engaged in modes of sensing, imagining, questioning and reflection.

During fieldwork, I sense how my embodied self moves through and engages with place, and the ways these movements are giving shape to a creative tracery in which the body feels for materiality in constituting this place. These movements are producing threads with which I am making sense of place. I think about ways of performing this place through engaging with modes of inhabitation. I want to lead the audience through some of the environs that make up the island as well as the mill.

Inhabiting this place through attending to a sensory and perceptual methodology brings me in contact with a shifting environment. My awareness extends to the flora and fauna, temperature, wind, sun, light, textures, ambience, sounds, smells, kinetic energy and rhythm.

I spend time inside and outside the mill engaging in an embodied tracery of the structural remains. The materiality of the mill acts as a visceral and visual stimulus for the imagination. At times my mind wanders, my body dances and other times I

remain still but in a state of attention. I deploy some of the ground work exercises I have learned from Body Weather training, a way of dwelling here that incorporates both body and the place in a reflexive feedback loop. This way of working is a sensory and experiential approach to place, which feeds backwards and forwards producing a ‘body of experience’/embodied experiencing. I am becoming aware of nuances and details about this place that I had not noticed before. I am building up a code, a structure of feeling about this place.



Fig. 26. Inscriptions on the interior wall of the mill

There are names and some indecipherable words inscribed up high on the stone wall inside the mill. It is difficult to make sense of them. A conversation with the caretaker reveals that people used to scratch their names into the stone walls. He mentions that his aunties used to play here. This happened during a time when the mill still had the second story which enabled people to access the upper section. I would like to find out more about the mill by speaking with people who have a personal connection through visiting this place as a child or through being related to the Cooper family.

Bodies and embodied practice can challenge and re-work the boundaries of place/s. In exploring this place and dwelling in this place I am mindful of practicing being in a state of place-openness. At times being here and aspects of the research can be quite confronting. I am here (often alone), so the question of gender and the kinds of risks I am prepared to take/make for the sake of research need to be carefully considered. However in order to engage with this place I realise that I have begun to

undertake research methods that involve being open and that are also helping me to re-think the nature of place boundaries. I am starting to imagine a performance that goes beyond the bounds of the mill.

Field Notes (20 August 2004)

Imagining the past

I am collecting some interesting forms of historical and contemporary documentation about this place, that include official correspondence, letters, diary entries of visits to the mill, paintings, photographs and news clippings. These traces are located in a range of places such as libraries, local history museums, and personal archives. Part of the process of researching this place involves engaging with archival resources. How will I use these traces in the performance?

I am given some postcards of the mill and the island by the heritage advisor during a visit to the Pinjarra Visitor Centre. The black and white and sepia tones evoke nostalgia designed to sell an image of a place that no longer exists.



Fig. 27. Postcard of Cooper's Mill. N.d. Photograph. Pinjarra Visitors Centre, Pinjarra.



Fig. 28. *Postcard of Cooleenup Island. N.d. Photograph. Pinjarra Visitors Centre, Pinjarra.*

*During this visit the heritage advisor reads me the letter written by Reg Cooper to the Murray Roads Board compelling them to restore the mill. The language in the letter is from another time.*²⁰³

The text of the letter by Reg Cooper is presented below. A reproduction of the original letter is on the following page at Figure 29.

²⁰³ In August 2004 I submitted a freedom of information application to the Department for Planning and Infrastructure to obtain copies of letters between the Cooper family and authorities relating to the mill. I received a file consisting of letters, administration documents, field surveys, memos and maps concerning the mill. This is an extract from one of the letters written by Reginald Cooper pertaining to mismanagement of the mill by the Murray Roads Board.

196 Murray St.,
Perth.

23rd April, 1959.

The Secretary,
Murray Road Board
PINJARRA.

Dear Sir,

I wrote to you on December 22nd (four months ago) pointing out That Cooper's Mill had been seriously damaged.

It took you one month (see letter January 19th) to instruct the Building Surveyor to make a report. Thereafter you treated the matter with nonchalance for 2½ months with the result that I wrote you a letter on April 6th; to say nothing of the fact that, at considerable expense, I put through frequent trunkline telephone calls.

I duly received your letter of April 8th stating that the Board was meeting on April 16th and at that meeting you must have placed before the Board the Building Inspector's report, which he had been instructed to make three months previously. Now there has been a further delay because it would appear that your Board has no confidence in its Building Inspector with the result that, according to your letter of April 21st, the Chairman of the Board is going to make his own inspection and the matter will not be considered again until 14th May, five months after my complaint. I have never heard of a worse exhibition of bureaucratic procrastination. I have told you more than once by letter and on the telephone that, whilst the damage is not great (although serious enough), the stability of the Mill has been seriously impaired. It will collapse if not repaired immediately.

Your Board's contemptible indifference to this great historic relic shows that the members have no respect for the efforts of the pioneers nor any appreciation of their trials, tribulations and deprivations which they suffered in order to set on foot an effort to make the District worthwhile for people in the future and, in due course, the members of your Board to ensconce themselves in the District in affluence and comfort.

I am this day writing to the Premier and the Minister for Lands reporting your inertia in carrying out your legal obligations. I think the attitude of the members of your Board in this matter is disgraceful.

It is unequivocally incontrovertible that the attitude of your Board in this matter calls for the severest measure of censure.

Yours faithfully,

REG. F. COOPER

196 Murray St.,
North.

63

23rd April, 1959.

The Secretary,
Murray Road Board,
211/212A.

Dear Sir,

I wrote to you on December 22nd (four months ago) pointing out that Cooper's Mill had been seriously damaged.

It took you one month (see letter January 19th) to instruct the Building Surveyor to make a report. Thereafter you treated the matter with nonchalance for 2½ months with the result that I wrote you a letter on April 6th; to say nothing of the fact that, at considerable expense, I put through frequent trunkline telephone calls.

I duly received your letter of April 5th stating that the Board was meeting on April 16th and at that meeting you must have placed before the Board the Building Inspector's report, which he had been instructed to make three months previously. Now there has been a further delay because it would appear that your Board has no confidence in its Building Inspector with the result that, according to your letter of April 21st, the Chairman of the Board is going to make his own inspection and the matter will not be considered again until 15th May, five months after my complaint. I have never heard of a worse exhibition of bureaucratic procrastination. I have told you more than once by letter and on the telephone that, whilst the damage is not great (although serious enough), the stability of the Mill has been seriously impaired. It will collapse if not repaired immediately.

Your Board's contemptible indifference to this great historic relic shows that the members have no respect for the efforts of the pioneers nor any appreciation of their trials, tribulations and deprivations which they suffered in order to set on foot an effort to make the District worthwhile for people in the future and, in due course, the members of your Board to ensconce themselves in the District in affluence and comfort.

I am this day writing to the Premier and the Minister for Lands reporting your inertia in carrying out your legal obligations. I think the attitude of the members of your Board in this matter is disgraceful.

It is unequivocally incontrovertible that the attitude of your Board in this matter calls for the severest measure of censure.

Yours faithfully,


REGINALD COOPER

Fig. 29. Reginald Cooper. *Letter to Murray Roads Board*. 1959. Unpublished letter.

Theoretical Reflection: Documentation

I am gathering materials that affect how I experience and perceive the mill. The involvement of the body extends to all areas of research. The experience of this 'place' does not reside purely at the level of its geographical location. It is becoming extended through my involvement with various other places where historical knowledge about the mill is archived. I travel to places which 'hold' archival materials and have conversations with people about the mill. The places and people I speak with are opening up further pathways for seeing and envisioning the mill. This is a dispersed and uneven process. The gathering of materials raises a question, for me, regarding the re-location or re-implacement of that material 'knowledge' about place elsewhere. While I am engaged in activities that involve gathering information and materials about the mill, I feel a sense of being fleshed out, embodied or re-bodied in a different way than I had been before commencing the research process. I also feel aspects of myself being left behind or sloughed off in the process in a way that often makes me feel rubbed raw. I do not have the story of the mill to present as a performance, but a creative way of inhabiting the research process as a journey. Through embodied modes of dwelling and travelling I am building pathways towards knowing and making sense of this place. These pathways are becoming material/materiality for thinking through the research process, contributing towards methods, shaping and collaborating in the "matrix of its production" (Carter, *Material* xi).

Field Notes (10 October 2004)

Restoring the Mill

I made a trip to the mill today and could see that the proposed restoration to the roof has begun.²⁰⁴ Scaffolding, equipment, safety signage, and work men were working at the site. I rowed across and went and sat on the recreation side of the island, but the

²⁰⁴ Restoration to the mill occurred from October 2004-March 2005 and this process made it difficult for me to continue to work on/at this location. I made use of this time to explore other areas of enquiry in regard to researching the history of the mill as well as working on the choreographic sequences of the performance and the collaborative audio track with a sound artist. I also relocated back to Perth in December.

sound of on site machinery was too distracting. I take a cutting of (what I later find out is) a rose geranium from a large bush near the playground area. It has a beautiful scent when pressed with the hand. I get to thinking about the contact of the body and the scent of plants being released. There are some unusual species of flora on the island and many that I am not familiar with. I will plant the rose geranium in a pot when I get home later today.

I contacted the builders contracted for the work to find out the estimated end date for the work being done on the mill. It is anticipated that the restoration work will be completed by December. I will make another visit to keep alive the sense of connection that I am building in relation to the mill/island. I will also find a studio space in Australind to begin to choreograph the movement sequences that are part of the creative imagining of this place. I will be working from memory during the choreographic process, experimenting with recall and sensory, embodied remembering of being in the mill and traversing the island's environs.

Theoretical Reflection: The places of fieldwork

The measure of place is not something I was consciously keeping track of in terms of the distance travelled (kilometres), but in terms of the effect of different kinds of social relations and networks, tracing the roles of people connected to/with and those who cared for the place. In this respect I came to consider the research practice I was doing as similar to Birkeland's definition of fieldwork in which she writes that, "[t]he starting point for field research is that development of knowledge takes place somewhere. This somewhere is a field" (17). However, rather than ascribing a hermeticism towards this term, it is perceived by Birkeland not as

a physical locality or a territorially fixed community, but a field of care for creation and recreation of knowledge. The field encompasses the researcher and the researched and the factual social relations and interaction between these, in addition to the constitution and outcome of these relations. (17)

This approach challenges the assumption underpinning traditional field research and ethnographic methods which depend on discrete spatial boundaries, a chronology or linear temporal experience and clear cut modes of observation and relationships between self and others.

Engaging with this place through fieldwork and research is contributing towards my own subjectivity as an emerging researcher. I am aware of a shifting geography of selves being developed in the process of place-making: the performer *as* traveller, visitor, collector, researcher, archivist-historian. I consider these selves as partial, contingent, ways of seeing and knowing place. These selves shape and are shaped in turn by exploring ways of inhabiting this place informed by geography, memory, embodied experience and imagination. The physicality of this process of place-making while difficult to represent through words shapes my experience of this place. Subjectivity is being constituted through the process of making connections to and with place.

In travelling through (read: negotiating, navigating) and across as well as dwelling (albeit temporarily) in various topoi (read: heritage sites and the environs within which they are situated, administration, institution, electronic interface) the way of reading place is becoming co-constituted (at times restricted) through these relations.

An embodied engagement with this place is enabling me to explore the process of moving in and through places in a way that makes use of wandering (way-faring and way-finding) as a radical act for conjuring dreams, images, and memory. I am connecting to/with the topography being moved in/through. The fieldwork process is activating temporal and spatial translations of self-in-relation to/with place. This particular opening of self and place is epitomised through the nomadic subjectivity which figures in the writing of Rosi Braidotti, a strategic way of thinking in the mode of “as if” in that

[n]omadic becoming is neither reproduction nor just imitation, but rather emphatic proximity, intensive interconnectedness ... Nomadic shifts designate therefore a creative sort of becoming; a performative metaphor that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of

interaction of experience and of knowledge. (qtd. in Jokinen and Veijola 43)

Although Braidotti's way of thinking is not about the actual practice of travel there is an emphasis on "the bodily roots of subjectivity: location, differences and the blurring of boundaries, rather than universality, unity and the burning of bridges" (qtd. in Jokinen and Veijola 42). My body is the bridge to place, creating pathways and a creative tracery of connections and threads as I journey (and my research journey extends) throughout this landscape.



Fig. 30. Performer using the pontoon to cross the river²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ New caretakers were appointed to the island in 2005. They allowed me to make use of the pontoon to access the island in the lead up to the performance.

Chapter 7

Performance Production and Documentation

Ways of inhabiting Cooper's Mill and the environs of Cooleenup Island informs my practical consideration of place for the creative production component of this thesis. An embodied and creative engagement with this place and its location culminated in a solo performance.²⁰⁶ The work took as its point of focus the notion of inhabitation as a framework for engaging with the interrelationship between body and place. This was the result of particular areas of practice explored during the research process. These areas included conversations with people which partly relied on oral history and interviewing, the collecting of documents and materials from archives, engaging with the experience and perception of "being-here" in place, as well as walking (for more on this see Chapter 6). Many of these acts/activities involved practicing modes of reflexivity and/or interpretation which took the form of reflexive writing, drawing, conversations and physical exploration of place through dance-movement practice as well as the use of sound-recording devices and photography. These modes and methods which underscored the research came to shape my ways of knowing and making sense of this place.

In this chapter I focus on key areas of production and processes/forms of documentation that I engaged with as part of creating the performance. The previous chapter foregrounds some of the perspectives I explored in the context of practice-based research, and this chapter shows how these developments were extended to further aid ways of understanding and engaging with place in and through performance. This was something I worked through in the process of making the performance and it led me to think about the kinds of relationships and experiences I wanted to manifest or draw attention to for the audience in relation to Cooper's Mill and the island. The modes and methods involved in areas of production and documentation helped me to further know my subject and to find ways of approaching those elements that I wanted to frame, and focus on, for the audience as part of the performance experience.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ I considered the performance to be a work in progress. In making the performance a diverse group of people were involved in different areas of the creative production process in ways that called for collaboration and consultation. Although the performance itself is presented as a solo work different people contributed towards its materialisation. These people are acknowledged on the list of credits at the end of the performance DVD.

²⁰⁷ The process of making the performance also revealed the limits of knowing and also led me to further reflect on the use of performance methods for showing/telling in terms of their potential to connect with audiences and invoke performative responses.

The performance work was shown to a small audience at midday on 29 May 2005 and was performed again the following day without an audience for the purpose of documentation.²⁰⁸ The documentation of the performance functions according to what Philip Auslander terms the “documentary category” which “represents the traditional way in which the relationship between performance art and its documentation is conceived”. The function of documenting performance in this way operates ideologically under the assumption “that the documentation of the performance event provides both a record of it through which it can be reconstructed and evidence that it actually occurred” (1). The performance, recorded on digital video and edited in post-production, is documented in the format of a DVD.²⁰⁹ The contents of the DVD consist of a filmed recording of the performance which evidences the performer (me) engaging with Cooper’s Mill and the environs of Cooleenup Island; an edited version of the performance which focuses on my engagement with Cooper’s Mill; additional scenography edited from the performance; audio track options for the viewer to select; the process of journeying to and from the island by boat; historic photographs of Cooper’s Mill and a performer’s biography.

I wanted to evoke an embodied and experiential sense of place in relation to Cooper’s Mill and its history. I worked on developing these areas in and through creative production for the performance. These evolved from the modes, methods and materials (discussed in Chapter 6) which provided a practical framework for experimentation and exploration throughout the research process. These were used to inform place-making and the making of the performance. There were a range of different processes involved in the creative production of the performance work. In

²⁰⁸ Photographs were taken during the performance that the audience attended by some of the audience members and also by a friend I had asked to attend the performance for the particular purpose of documentation. A professional videographer filmed the performance without an audience present the following day. I decided to take this approach as I felt that the process of documenting the performance might obstruct and/or distract the attention of the audience. The small scale of the island and the interior spaces of the mill also had to be considered so that the audience had room to move which I thought might be adversely affected by the spatial and technical requirements necessary for filming the performance.

²⁰⁹ At the time of documenting the performance I chose this format because it enabled me to foreground specific areas of the work, and importantly, be able to show the work to audiences that would not be there for the performance. Since then I have become aware of the complex issues which now inform the conceptual terrain of the relationship between performance and documentation. These issues form part of Matthew Reason’s inquiry into “how ... representations make performance knowable” (3).

this chapter I briefly explicate some key areas of production which feature in the performance and documentation.

Audio Track

The audio track consists of materials gathered and remixed during the research process. Included on this track are recordings of sounds I collected during walks while exploring Cooper's Mill and the surrounding environs of Cooleenup Island, the voice of Henry Sutton recalling genealogical history during an interview, as well as additional sound effects sampled from a special effects sound library (selected to amplify the ambience of the mill and the island environs). The sounds included on the audio track are intended to provide stimulus for the audience that can potentially open up sensory and perceptual pathways for experiencing and imagining this place. It is my attempt to invoke a listening on the part of the audience so as to enhance the approaches I engaged with during the creative research process and to connect the audience to these activities.

I anticipated the use of the audio track for the performance in different ways. Initially I intended the audience to listen to the audio track using a walkman with headphones while undertaking a walk in, through and across the mill/island while being guided by me. However, there were a number of safety issues in using this approach on the island as many of the spaces on the island are not considered public spaces. I did not want to jeopardise the safety of an audience by leading them into areas where they might be put at risk of injury by insects, snakes or something else potentially dangerous such as the swampland area and the dense, prickly bushland scrub. I also considered playing the audio track while moving through the mill and island environs. However, setting up a number of speaker systems around the island was not technically possible as the equipment made available to me was limited. Finding technical equipment that I could use was also problematic due to the location and insurance issues associated with using equipment at a place that was near water and situated outside a building. Due to these constraining factors I eventually made use of the audio track as part of the performance inside the mill. This added an additional thread for the audience in relation to experiencing the mill and the island.

Including an audio component as part of the creative production was one of the pathways for me to get to know the mill and the island. Being-here in this place I became aware of the sounds and living micro worlds that are part of the island habitat. Listening became a way for tuning in to difference at this place. For me, as a performer, the sounds registered kinaesthetically as well as synaesthetically generating stimulus, embodied reflexes and images which became the framework for creative choreography. I also found that I gravitated towards areas where sounds as well as the absence of sound were most potent. One of the areas I explored was the swampland situated in close proximity to the mill. The abundance of wildlife and insects inhabiting this place was an intriguing contradistinction to the built environment nearby with its cleared spaces and heritage/recreational values. The sounds of the swampland were recorded and included as material for the audio track.



Fig. 31. Recording sounds of the island environs

The sound of walking at the island was also included to evoke a sense of the rhythmic and embodied dimensions of being-here. I wanted to capture a sense of inhabiting this place as an embodied experience. Knowing this place through the body was a particular pathway I wanted to include in the performance. The audio track provides an additional frame for the audience as a pathway into reading this place to potentially evoke the senses and the imagination.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Re-imagining ways of inhabiting this place (through performance) occurred alongside current considerations and future plans for public engagement with the mill and the island by those with a

The creation of the audio track developed from working with sounds, textures, walking rhythms, Dictaphone recordings, and sections of the oral history interview. I gathered these materials during fieldtrips to the mill/island while undertaking the research process. Working with a sound artist these materials were experimented with through processes of mixing, layering and looping to produce a sensory and experiential audio track. As listening was a significant element during my exploratory work at the mill/island I wanted to augment the performance using sounds to evoke a sense of this place. The diversity of sounds shift from the emotive and theatrical to spoken words and rhythmic patterns. Sounds were selected for the ways that they connect to different modes of listening. Some sounds register different ways of listening that also promote a way of looking. The use of sounds that were visceral and embodied are designed to evoke an experiential sense of being here in this place while the threads of spoken words are more interpretive and geared towards understanding place history in a more straightforward way. The audio track provides a hook for the audience to engage with the mill/island in a way that potentially affects how they see and experience this place.

Documents

The documents I chose to include in the performance were selected as a way to enhance as well as re-frame the experience of heritage/tourism at the mill. The choice not to use documents such as the letters between Reg Cooper and The Murray Roads Board (see Chapter 6, Fig. 25) which I had received through FOI was in part influenced by the fact that The Murray Roads Board now the Shire of Murray had permitted me to make use of the mill for a performance. The Board requested from me a summary of how I intended to make use of the mill throughout the research process and the kind of performance I intended to present to an audience. I did not want to politicise the ongoing historical negotiation between Reg Cooper and the Murray Roads Board, although I think this could have been one avenue to explore further. There were however, many official documents regarding the mill with some

vested interest in managing the heritage experience of Cooper's Mill. The recreational side of the island was upgraded in 2004 with the addition of barbeque facilities and a playground. During 2004-5 consultation took place regarding an interpretation plan for Cooper's Mill that would incorporate more of the island context. There was also a proposal to consider the possibility of a viewing platform over the swampland.

that were difficult to read due to the illegibility of the writing as well as the coded language systems that belong to another time and place.

It took time to obtain copies of particular archival resources. In the end I decided to include several historical photographs of the mill in the format of large projections against the interior wall of the mill as a counterpoint to the framed display of photographs stuck to the wall in the boiler room section. I used a slide projector (low-tech) and presented these images to the audience as a way of showing past faces of the mill and to present a format of the archive that gradually disappears in contradistinction to the fixity of the photographs in the adjoining room.

I collected documents as a way of finding out how this place had been remembered and as a potential tool for engaging with the mill in and through performance. I received further documents after the performance such as maps that I would have liked to include but ‘making do’ is often the *modus operandi* of experimental and exploratory performance practices. I was aware of the body-place relationship through photographs that I encountered while collecting archival evidence of the history of the mill. I also observed the ways in which present interactions between body-place occurred when people (tourists/visitors) visited the mill.²¹¹ The ‘normative choreographies’ I observed made me think about how I could engage with the mill/island in more creative ways. Historical experiences of the mill and island (gleaned from historical photographs, conversations and personal diaries) included traversing the environs, swimming in the estuary and engaging with the spaces in a more rugged and embodied sense (than users today). Contemporary embodied experience appeared to me to be limited to particular areas at the site and circumscribe specific modes of embodied activity. For example, the activity of reading which occurs inside the mill is foregrounded as central to understanding the history/heritage significance of this place (discussed in Chapter 5). The modest display of written information and old photographic evidence offers a way of looking into the past but it also says something of the representational form and documents

²¹¹ Similarly, in the tourism analysis of Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt et al, the importance of the body is underscored in relation to the mobile methods they discuss in their research examining some of the ways people move and perform in places when engaging in travel and leisure activities while on holidays.

that are used in the present to draw attention to specific meanings for particular social and cultural purposes.²¹²

Embodied Practice

Being-here in this place led to creative pathways for exploring and actively engaging with the mill and island environs. Dwelling inside the mill I practiced a sensory and embodied topoanalysis of the building's materiality absorbing nuance and detail of stone, wood, lichen and the objects on display. I got to know in an intimate and embodied sense the nuances, fragments and textures of the mill's interior and exterior spaces. This process of investigation was a stimulus for reflexively engaging with the mill and island environs which generated a feedback loop that nourished pathways for choreographic movement sequences, (embodied) imagery as well as points of stillness/reflection (for letting come, letting be). The embodied and relational dynamics of this approach for being-in and with place was informed by principles that guide the philosophy and practice of Body Weather training (see Chapter 2).

It was a shock to me when I returned to the mill after the restoration had been completed (March 2005). The affect of the new materiality radically altered my own sense of relationship creating a temporary estrangement between myself and the place. Many of the familiar markings and people's names inscribed into the stone work had been rendered over during this process. As some of the choreographic sequences had been constructed through deploying these traces in creative and imaginative ways it was unfortunate that these markings were no longer visible. Rendering over these aspects that gave the mill character was not part of the proposal (according to the heritage adviser), however this is what the builders did, with one of

²¹² This approach towards reading the significance of the mill through the display and framing of history and heritage value underscores the methods and interests of the Shire of Murray, the local history society and the practices implemented by heritage advisers. Many heritage tourism places are gradually deploying a range of sensory-perceptual frameworks as part of expanding on existing strategies and approaches for interpretation as part of the heritage tourism experience. During my time of fieldwork and research, there was a shift occurring in the representational forms and methods used by heritage advisers to contextualise heritage and interpretation at the mill. In 2005 I became aware of a proposal for an interpretation plan for the purpose of contributing towards the future conservation, management and interpretation of the mill and its island context.

them carving in their own name and the date above the door effectively marking their place in the mill's history. However, as I had built up an intimate topoanalysis with the interior spaces of the mill I could easily recall the location of cracks, markings and the inscriptions of people's names and other words scratched into the interior walls.

Walking also became a part of my active engagement with place and this guided one of the pathways for getting to know the mill and island environs. Walking was a mode for knowing place as I gradually came to notice nuances and details that opened up pathways for creatively imagining this place. The walks became a way for releasing mind and body a process that acted as a stimulus for place-making as well as a method for gathering a body of experience based on sounds and sensory impressions which became materials that I worked into the audio track and choreography.



Fig. 32. Walking at Cooleenup Island

The fieldwork led to a creative tracery of the mill and island with the performer's body inscribing and marking out new pathways and points of contact. This creative

cartography was performed by dwelling and moving in, through and across this place while practicing being in a state of place-openness. The performance documents some of these pathways as I embody some of the landmarks and features that I came to know through performing an intimate topoanalysis of this place. I was conscious of the ways in which particular areas on the island have been cleared to allow movement that orientates towards buildings and access of public spaces. There are no paths that lead off away from these designated areas. Therefore, part of the process of exploring the place was to open up pathways with the body by walking. This was not a linear process but rather an open-ended mode of wayfaring and wayfinding where I would often find myself negotiating physically with the swampland, tangled scrub and bushland as well as other contexts that I encountered on the island. I recorded with a Dictaphone the process of walking collecting the sounds of wildlife, the bodily engagement with the mill and island terrain as well as the rhythmic rise and fall of walking.

The performance documents the ethnographic traces of walking, use of Dictaphone and the protective clothing as I wanted to include aspects of the research process in the performance to show some of the modes, methods and materials that informed the creative production. I envisioned the performance as being a way towards presenting some of the practices I had been experimenting with, plus the soundtracks which had been re-worked and then inserted into the performance frame.

The critical efficacy of performance is its ephemeral nature. I came to reflect on the embodied engagement with the mill and island environs as a way of opening up the site (of this heritage place) to new pathways and ways of re-imagining heritage/history. The performance became a way of marking the site in an ephemeral and creative way by working against the grain of the normative visions of reading heritage places as well as recuperating some of the lost visions I had encountered in the archival traces of documentation that related to the mill and the island.

The Audience

I wanted the audience to experience up close and through physical immersion both Cooper's Mill and the island.²¹³ In shaping this kind of experience I also needed to consider the existing frames that play a part in conditioning the experience of visiting the mill. With this in mind I considered the role of the journey to the mill/island which entailed for me a consideration of the physicality of space and place. In order to bring an audience to the mill also involved organisation in terms of boating facilities as well as obtaining insurance for this means of transport.

The performance was shown to a small group of 10 people. The audience was comprised of a mixed group of people consisting of academics, dancers/performers, family members, friends, and a local community member who transported the audience to and from the island by boat.²¹⁴ The size of the audience was also influenced by the boat's seating capacity. A map with directions to a jetty in South Yunderup was given to the audience several weeks prior to the performance along with a brief synopsis of performance details. Most audience members drove from Perth to Yunderup by car and were then conveyed to the island by boat. The boat trips to and from the mill with Bruce Tathum, the owner of the boat, were an opportunity for audience members to ask questions and also for Tathum to share some of his knowledge of the river and local history.²¹⁵ While I was not on board the boat with the audience members during the boat trips to the mill (as I needed to be in place ready for the performance) I returned to the launching jetty with the audience after the performance, experiencing the Yunderup waterways and listening to the questions and comments posed by the audience. Some of the audience members also took photographs during the boat trips. These responses were, for me, an important

²¹³ I considered setting up the performance as an installation in a studio based in Perth which would have been convenient in terms of travel for most audience members but I wanted to share with an audience the kind of work I had been engaging in at the mill/island.

²¹⁴ As I was not living in the Murray district it was difficult to seek out local community groups as potential participants in the research process or audience members for the performance.

²¹⁵ The Tathum family are associated with the history of the Peel region in Western Australia. For more information, see Richards *Murray District*, and *Murray and Mandurah*.

aspect of the performance experience as they foregrounded the different perceptions of the audience.²¹⁶



Fig. 33. Murray River by boat

I wanted to re-shape the heritage tourism experience by drawing attention to the process of travelling there, the environs surrounding the mill, the role of walking, the embodied relationship with the mill and the display of documents. I wanted to give the audience an experience of place that emphasizes the senses and the body, so that perhaps they will remember and maybe one day return to this particular place.²¹⁷

Afterthoughts

After the performance I thought about the many different ways I could or should have done things. There were many different pathways that could have been taken in shaping a place-making performance. I would have liked to explore the use of technology further as well as methods of curation to reframe the heritage aspects of the mill. However, limits were imposed on the kind of place-making I was able to produce. The structural materiality of the mill including displays were not allowed to be altered and re-designing the space inside the mill to include additional features

²¹⁶ I also asked the audience members to offer written responses on a piece of paper after the performance as a way of further encouraging a participatory framework and as an insight for me into their experience of the performance and the mill/island.

²¹⁷ Perspectives on the kinds of memory work that are practiced by people in relation to heritage and tourism contexts are discussed by L Smith; and Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt et al.

that might bring into question the existing frames of heritage were also not permitted. In the end, the use of technology was limited.

However, I considered the performance to be a significant stepping stone towards exploring some of the creative production threads generated by the research process. In engaging with these areas through performance there is scope to further develop the approaches and perspectives I experimented with during the research, production and documentation processes. Performing heritage and history invites further opportunities for exploration, particularly in relation to community involvement and strategies of interpretation. The role of walking in relation to creative practice is also an ongoing mode of praxis that I would like to pursue further. Experimenting with archival documentation in relation to a particular place is also an area of enquiry that I would like to develop further. Importantly, the performance has opened up further pathways for intellectual and practical enquiry. In particular it has made me think about specific areas which emerged in relation to the kinds of work I was engaging with, such as the role of art and archives, ways of performing with documents, and the role of mobile practices (for example, the tour and modes of travelling) in constructing the performance experience.

One of the interesting things that followed on after my performance at the mill/island was an interpretation plan for the mill (final draft plan completed in July 2006). In this plan my performance is cited as one of the background resources alongside other formal documents, photographic evidence, written materials and reports (to substantiate the claims of the proposal?), and is referred to as a form of “site interpretation” (Shire of Murray et al. 7). While it is a little unsettling to think that the role of performance and my engagement with the mill/island is now considered to be part of the history of this place, it has led me to rethink the role or function of performance documentation and how it may one day offer an understanding of this place in the future.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have developed a new framework for understanding and engaging with place in performance. I have argued for a way of conceptualizing place that is critical and creative in its approach toward ways of thinking about human connectedness to places. To enhance this approach I have developed embodied, phenomenological and topological perspectives to inform ways of thinking about place which are fundamentally connected to the body. In foregrounding the importance of the interrelationship between body and place this perspective enriches understandings of what it means to be in place, to experience place in and through performance. This thesis adds to an understanding of place as a philosophical and lived entity, and presents fresh perspectives for thinking about the relation between place and performance as it is currently theorized and practiced.

The role of the body forms a critical part of my own poetics in making sense of place. To invoke this understanding I have worked towards building on the concepts of place that dialectically support an embodied way of being in place. In particular, I have drawn on Casey's perspective to manifest a way of thinking that recognises the inextricable link between body and place, for "[a]lthough displaced bodies are frequently found, an unimplaced body is as difficult to conceive as is a bodiless place ... we are bound by body to be in a place" (*Getting* 104). Furthermore he states that, "just as there is no place without body – without the physical or psychical traces of body – so there is no body without place" (Casey, *Getting* 104). It is the physical and psychical experiences of being in place or out of place, which have formed the fertile grounds of my thesis. In foregrounding some of the processes and practices of place-making in the context of performance/research, I have examined how "place itself ... [is] lived and imagined and re-membered" (Casey, *Getting* 104). My approach, by way of topo-analysis, has engaged with the felt, lived dimensions of being in place. This has enabled me to think through and find a language with which to articulate some of the complex and revealing ways that "embodiment brings implacement – as well as continual reimplacement – in its immediate wake" into being (Casey, *Getting* 104). In the process a shift in my own understanding of place, and the important role of place in performance, has emerged. Through exploring ways of making connections to and with place the potential exists for awakening our minds and bodies to the possibility of realizing a deeper sense of connection to place/s.

I have considered a range of senses and lenses in making connections to place.²¹⁸ To help develop an understanding of some of the ways performance and place are linked, I have discussed how performance can illuminate different experiences of being-in-place, to show the different terrain upon which all human beings are implaced. In positing specific arguments about human-place relationships I have demonstrated how forms of practice can address some of the issues associated with implacement in ways that stimulate questions about what it means to be in place/s. I have explored the question of inhabitation by investigating embodied approaches for place-making in creative practice and how they contribute towards knowledge production in ways that open or evoke a consciousness of place through the sensory and experiential dimensions of our being. This has helped me to understand, and show the reader, how performance can be used to facilitate a process of exchange and transformation (between human beings and places) to better understand how we are integrally connected to the place-world. It has also allowed me to consider the ways in which performance can potentially draw attention to where dis-connections between places and beings exist. Now more than ever this is critically important because as Bogart writes,

[w]hat is at stake in art in our present global context is nothing less than the human necessity to adjust to a fast-changing world. We are either connected or cut off, and art can connect us. (*And then* 112)

The discourses and practices I have utilized in this thesis offer tools for engaging with place/s in ways that call for being guided by what our embodied responses are telling us (or failing to tell us), what this might mean for us as emplaced human beings and how this can contribute towards a renewed understanding of, or call for a revision in, the ways we inhabit place/s.

While this thesis has contributed to the discipline by engaging with a range of contexts and ways of exploring place, what has emerged is a sense of the importance and value of making connections to place in ways that can transform our perceptions

²¹⁸ As Susan Kelly writes, “[p]ractice as a form of intellectual inquiry crucially allows us to consider registers of social, bodily, material, unconscious, spatial, and visual experience as forms of knowledge” (142).

of place.²¹⁹ I have invoked this by journeying, through forms of ‘ingress’ into place, which as Casey reminds us,

bring ... (sic) actualities and virtualities of motion that have little if anything to do with speed and everything to do with exploration and inhabitation, with depth instead of distance, horizon rather than border, arc and not perimeter. (*Getting* 289)

There are potentially no limits to the ways in which we might journey into places. I have examined several forms of “exploration and inhabitation” in my performance analyses which hopefully have given the reader a deeper insight into what it means to live with/in and become part of places through ways of journeying that raise compelling issues of history, memory, identity and belonging. These performative journeys have created (versions of) place, adding to our understandings of place in ways that shift accepted or deeply entrenched perspectives of who and where we are, how we look at, think, interact with, and feel about our own relationships to places.

I have taken the reader on a series of journeys: through travelling to the central desert of Australia as a necessary step towards unmaking (my) acculturated knowing, and learning new ways of seeing and being in place; through analyses in which performers attempt to walk in another person’s shoes as a strategy towards re-inhabiting and reclaiming history and memory to change Australian imaginings of the land; in contemporary cultural practices which offer modes of response to counteract ‘placelessness’ by exploring connections and relationships to places that are ‘lived’ locally, mobilizing strategic encounters and innovative ways of engaging with the social contexts people inhabit in everyday life; and by looking around in Perth, noticing places in the landscape, I have undertaken a critical analysis of the social, historical, cultural and political role and function of places defined as ‘heritage’, and journeyed elsewhere shaped by the impact and conditions of wider, global circumstances to further explore the interrelationship between heritage, place, and performance.

²¹⁹ Since completing the practical component of this thesis I have become aware of new ideas emerging in relation to walking practice both within Performance Studies and as an interdisciplinary field of research.

These journeys have contributed towards shaping ways of understanding place/s. They have brought a critical awareness to the role and function of performance in reconfiguring ways of being-in-place, thinking about the relationships between people and place, and the ways that performance can revitalize these connections. Hopefully, these journeys into place have raised questions for the reader/viewer, sparked conversations, opened up dialogues or debates around issues of placelessness, in ways that can continue to cultivate different and multi-layered perspectives of place.

As society in general is in a process of constant change important questions concerning peoples relationships to place in everyday life and the ways that performance can address this emerge. One of the roles of performance is to get us to rethink our emplaced situations, enliven us physically and psychically, and reimagine ways of experiencing being in places. Performance studies can extend this mode of inquiry by participating in current discourses of place in other disciplines and in so doing, further expand possibilities for thinking about place, bringing place more consciously into our lives. In re-thinking our human connectedness to place and how this will continue to inform the ongoing work of a poetics of place in both theory and practice it is Buttimer's idea of poetics which invokes particular significance for future journeys into place. Pursuing the "critical and emancipatory" role of cultural practices holds the key for unlocking and releasing us from habitual and potentially limiting ways of seeing and being in place (*Geography* 15). It is an important reminder that in pursuing freedom from constraint this also comes from being committed to a course of action, a way of thinking, a mode of response. In this sense it is vital that performance continues to engage with ways of responding (and acting responsibly) in relation to place and dwelling on this earth, to remind us to step lightly in anticipation of the future encounters that are yet to take place.

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Exercises from the 'Manipulations' sessions of the Body Weather training component. 1999. Photograph. TripleAlice Archive, Department of Performance Studies University of Sydney.

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Image of Cooper's Mill. N.d. Photograph. Collection of Mandurah Historical Society.

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Photograph of Cooper's Mill from the 1940s which shows it boarded up. N.d. Photograph. Collection of Mandurah Historical Society.

Postcard of Cooper's Mill. N.d. Photograph. Pinjarra Visitors Centre, Pinjarra.

Postcard of Coolenup Island. N.d. Photograph. Pinjarra Visitors Centre, Pinjarra.

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- - -. Perimeter fencing surrounds the East Perth Power Station. 2006. Photograph. Collection of Larissa Pryce.

Workshop participant engaged in a 'Groundwork' exercise. 1999. Photograph.

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Workshop participant (Larissa Pryce), 'Groundwork' training session Triple Alice 1, exploring the environs of Hamilton Downs. 1999. Photograph. TripleAlice Archive, Department of Performance Studies University of Sydney.

Workshop participant (Larissa Pryce) working from sense-memory. 1999. Photograph. TripleAlice Archive, Department of Performance Studies University of Sydney.

Workshop participants engaged in a 'Groundwork' session at the dry river bed of the Todd River near Hamilton Downs Station. 1999. Photograph. TripleAlice Archive, Department of Performance Studies University of Sydney.

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